

HIGHBRIDGE: WORKING FROM THE BROKEN BODY IN  
RECOVERY TO THE HEALING SPIRIT OF RESILIENCE

By

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## ABSTRACT

# HIGHBRIDGE: WORKING FROM THE BROKEN BODY IN RECOVERY TO THE HEALING SPIRIT OF RESILIENCE

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**The Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD)** is a faith-based, community-service organization located in the Highbridge section of the Southwest Bronx. This project shifts the paradigm of local human service to community members from the broken body in recovery, to the healing spirit of resilience, by empowering clients to resolve their problems. It develops a leadership training model that cultivates and crafts strategies for full citizenship in participants, enabling them to resist power-structures that perpetuate injustice and inequity.

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To my mother, Julia Adams Cordner; to the memory of my maternal grandmother, Leah Maximae (1970) and paternal grandmother, Bernadette Cordner (1917-2009)—may their spirits roam free and their names be remembered forever; and to my daughter Daniella Kenlyn Cordner, and my grandchildren Kayla Simone Johnson Cordner and Eric Johnson, Jr.

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To all of you I am forever grateful

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development was founded to serve the neighborhoods of Mount Hope, Morris Heights, University Heights, Fordham, Parkchester, Castle Hill, and Uniport—neighborhoods of the Bronx with a total population of approximately 304,000—57% of whom have resided in the United States for fewer than ten years. When, in 2005, the organization made the transition from a “table-top” to a storefront operation with public offices, its arena of service expanded by approximately 33%, to include Bronx Community Board 4, in which the Highbridge neighborhood is located. The Office of City Planning, statistics on these neighborhoods illustrate that residents suffer from some of the worst cases of social disconnection in New York City. In fact, 16.7 % of all households in the Bronx are categorized as linguistically isolated.<sup>1</sup> This handicap often accompanies other social, economic, and immigration-documentation challenges and makes navigating government systems more difficult. These communities are home to people from diverse faith traditions. While these neighborhoods house at least ten mosques, most of which are ethnic group specific, there are few culturally appropriate

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<sup>1</sup> Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, New York University, <http://www.furmancenter.org> (accessed March 28, 2009).



services available for Muslim or immigrant women and fewer still that are led by Muslim women themselves. The mosques also do not offer any structured social services.

Since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the number of female lead households in MWIRD's catchment area and client base has increased. This is due to the detention or deportation of men—the main income earners and heads of households who, in many instances, were the language brokers between the women and the outside world. The majority of the organization's clients' areas of origin are West Africa, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. A direct result of the increased detentions and deportations is that many new immigrant women, physically and linguistically isolated from the greater community, are faced with responsibilities for which they have no skills and for many of them returning to their countries of origin is not a viable option.

In communities with significant new immigrant populations, a major portion of disaster related and basic needs go unmet because of concerns over immigration status, deportation, and resulting valid fear of new immigration laws and policies. The Institute has worked with clients directly affected by this and other disasters, to secure disaster relief and address their needs, because many are undocumented and had been denied relief benefits for which they were often eligible.

### **HIGHBRIDGE – The Community**

This project is an intimate look at human service delivery in the northern Highbridge neighborhood in the Southwest Bronx, NY. Like many neighborhoods in areas of urban decay coupled with a high density of new immigrants, Highbridge is, in most instances, described in terms of what it lacks. However, Highbridge's assets and resources are rather impressive. Its diverse population, of whom 32.5% are foreign born, makes for a

culturally rich community, an excellent incubator for the cultivation of global citizens with cultural universality developed through exposure and experience. Of the total population of the Highbridge neighborhood (33,315), more than 50% (17,514) are under 30 years of age—with a median age of 27.25 years<sup>2</sup>. This youthful cohort of the community, with effective civic education has the greatest potential to transform and empower this neighborhood.

Current models of human service delivery, including those implemented by faith-based human service agencies, implicitly demand victimhood from those accessing the services offered. There is an unstated requirement that clients present themselves as lacking any agency. Most human service providers engage in the nebulous task of agency instruction—teaching how to have agency. This is masked by calling it “empowerment training”—often a pre-requisite for the national fad of community organizing (primarily from the Chicago school). This is also the mode of human service delivery sanctioned by the funding community of private, corporate, and government funders. The community of funders endorsing or accepting this model has grown to include funders within faith communities.

It is very troubling when people of faith, many with belief systems that teach of the Divine as being present in all of creation, employ models and systems of work and service delivery that fail to acknowledge the Divine presence in service recipients.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nydailynews.com/ny\\_local/your\\_neighborhood/community\\_reports/Highbridge](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/your_neighborhood/community_reports/Highbridge) (accessed September, 2009).

## **THE SITE – The Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development**

The Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD) is a place that embodies my ministry, mission and spirituality as MWIRD’s founder, and of those I encounter on my journey to myself and to Allah. Currently located in the Highbridge section of the Southwest Bronx, MWIRD is my congregation, my community, and my place of faith-work. Since 1997, MWIRD has given physical manifestation and formal expression to an embodied spiritual partnership, beginning with the formation of the Mount Hope Masjid Food Pantry, the first *halal* (i.e., in keeping with the Islamic dietary regulations) food pantry in New York City.

MWIRD is articulated and envisioned as an organization informed by the Islamic teachings of seeking knowledge, caring for humanity, being responsible guardians for all of creation and being a good neighbor. In practical terms, MWIRD offers a platform on which an intentional effort is made to include an Islamic component in the arena of faith-grounded human service work and pastoral care in the United States—with the firm belief that the arena will be greatly enriched with this inclusion. The Institute also reclaims the rich tradition of responsive human service delivery practiced by the first sizable urban Muslim population of African descent in the United States, the Nation of Islam. MWIRD presents Islam as a faith tradition which instructs, celebrates, and rewards such efforts. Accomplishing this goal will also be an act of reciprocity as many Muslims are the recipients of timely and valuable services from other faith communities and now have the opportunity to act in the role of service provider.

As a location of ministry, MWIRD—in its mission and through its action—ministers to its founder and the persons selected to serve as board members. However,

since 2005, when the organization made the transition from a kitchen table operation to a full community service organization with public offices, those to whom the organization ministers have come to include staff members, volunteers and neighbors. The staff comprises four full-time employees and two part-time employees, complemented by six volunteers and two independent contractors. Approximately fifty-percent of the staff is Muslim. Like the mission work we do, our ministry is delivered to and shared with a multi-faith constituency. It is in this space that the paradox of the universality of faith and the specificity of faith-traditions and religions become most apparent.

The main ministries of MWIRD have been individual spiritual development; economic and educational empowerment and advancement; provision of space in which women may define for themselves their faith process—to present their voice; to tell stories of the individual and the group and to dream. For the founder, it has been more a matter of practice rather than of theory—a matter of “keeping it real”. This ministry has been one of self-confrontation, bone-baring truth, self-preservation, denial, and flirting. The ministry of leadership through service is the foundation stone of MWIRD: to connect the work to central Islamic concepts and the teachings and examples of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*).

## **IN MINISTRY WITHOUT BEING A MINISTER**

Identifying and locating myself, continues to be a space of anxiety and uncertainty. Which version of me is appropriate or true for this place/space? Who is asking? What or how much do I want to share? I am seeking to be a Doctor of Ministry, but paradoxically, I am not a “minister” in the sense that most of my peers at New York Theological Seminary are. Yet I am “in ministry”.

I am a Muslim; and Islam is a religion which does not ordain clergy in the sense that Christianity does. I am “in ministry”—in that I am in faith-motivated service to humanity. I am not a “minister”—if the term “Imam” is taken to but the Islamic equivalent of this title as Christians use it. I am a Muslim leader, but the term *Imam* (the literal meaning of which is “leader”) is not usually applied to women. On the other hand, I have earned credentials as a chaplain. As a chaplain, I am indeed a “minister”—although I am not called “reverend” as other ministers often are.

By being “in ministry” yet not being “a minister” in the sense in which these terms are most often used is a constant challenge, but also a lesson to all who would use these terms narrowly.

## **GENDER-PARITY AND POLITICS**

My discussion and analysis of faith would not be complete if it did not also include some thoughts on gender-parity and politics. To do so, I will discuss disparities in literacy rates for women and girls, the marginalization of women in faith communities and the exclusion of women from the central decision-making processes in these communities. As approaches in curriculum development, methodology and instructional materials for interfaith education are explored, it is imperative that—from the inception of project—deliberate intention and conscious action be taken to insure gender parity at all levels of the process. The female soul, and thereby the female body, must be understood to be in full covenant with God—a partner in the human covenant with the Divine.

Women have been excluded from the decision-making processes addressing conflicts in India and Kashmir (Islam and Hindu), Northern Ireland (Catholic and Protestant), Middle East (Islam and Judaism)—in all of which religion holds a key role.

Women and children have been, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted by these conflicts, though glaringly absent from conflict resolution and peace process discussions.

A summary is appropriate at this point, in order to set the stage for suggestions for attaining gender parity at all levels of projects such as MWIRD's work in Highbridge.

UNESCO statistics indicate that of the 890 million illiterate adults in the world two-thirds are women<sup>3</sup>. These statistics also show that girls remain most likely to be unschooled, and that even in countries where 100% percent literacy rates have been attained or appear attainable; women and girls continue to have literacy rates significantly lower than their male counterparts.

Although schooling and literacy are not always an accurate measurement of education and or knowledge—and acknowledging that a universal definition of literacy remains elusive—an earnest appeal must be made to faith communities to investigate how the education (not just formal schooling) of women and girls has helped or hurt the reach of the faith traditions and its message.

The question emerges and the challenge is laid down: Can an inter- or multi-faith project like this one be deliberate in including women as full participants from conception to delivery? Many people spend their entire lives maximizing whatever privilege they can assert: be that *gender*—in most societies, men enjoy privilege, purely for being male; *literacy*—where those who are able to read and possibly write, exercise privilege over the unlettered; *race/ethnicity*—where physical or national origin insures

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Literacy report 2000 <http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/stats/statistics/literacy2000.htm> (accessed 01/30/2009).

privileges to one group or individual over others; or, *religious identity*—the assignment of chosenness and the right to dominate others who do not share the same beliefs.

It can be argued that women constitute the largest percent of the faithful, of the believers in all faith communities. However, when we look at the ranks of theologians and scholars of faith-traditions and communities, women constitute a very small segment. Also, in some traditions, women are completely excluded from these areas of scholarship. This, in my opinion, is a major contributing factor to the many crises that humanity faces. Similar disparities exist in other areas of civic and political life.

The Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, identified the effects of armed conflict on women as one of 12 critical areas of concern requiring action by governments and the international community, and stressed the need to promote the equal participation of women in conflict resolution at all decision-making levels.<sup>4</sup>

In 1998, during its forty-second session, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discussed the issue of women and armed conflict and proposed further action to be taken by member states and the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Platform's strategic objectives in this area, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all relevant policies and programs. Among the agreed conclusions of the session were measures to ensure gender sensitive justice, address the specific needs and concerns of women refugees and displaced persons, and increase the participation of women in peacekeeping, peace-building, pre- and post-conflict decision-making and conflict prevention. The measures of the agreed conclusions have not been enacted.

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<sup>4</sup> Women and Armed Conflict Gender Equality, Development and Peace For the Twenty-first Century <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm> (accessed 1/30/2009).

To date, the discourses on Conflict Resolution and Prevention and Peace have emerged and evolved primarily in the Human Rights arena, which has been secular and in many instances antagonistic or confrontational to faith communities—despite the fact that many conflicts, like those identified earlier, have religious overtones or are premised in an interpretation of sacred text or teaching; and despite the fact that some faith communities can provide living testimony as to how to regain and maintain peace after conflict.

The significance and relevance of these issues to Highbridge is that many of those served by MWIRD, thus participants in this project, have had their access to education, to basic literacy, hindered or denied by conflict. It may be asked why the literacy of women and girls is important to the issue of interfaith education. One response to that question is that if we continue to treat these issues separately and wait to address women and girls literacy before we include them as stakeholders in addressing basic human needs (the most common factor underlying all conflicts)—which include security and safety—then more than 600 million adults who happen to be women are excluded. I suggest that faith communities reach beyond the narrow space of literacy to which we have regulated education; and that, in our attempts to develop effective interfaith education models and human service programs and delivery systems, we incorporate other ways of knowing, with different modes of knowledge and methods of transfer that are not literacy-based—thereby being more inclusive of women. Caution must be taken, because if we move ahead using current modes of pedagogy, systems of delivery, and instruments of measurement we will continue to exclude women and fail to service more than half of humanity.



I have been blessed not to have experienced the challenge of living in an area of open warfare or conflict; however I have lived, worked, and worshipped with families and individuals who have had these life-altering experiences. I have also visited areas of conflict. In the summer of 2002, I visited the occupied territories of Palestine. My visit was two weeks after the Jenin massacre in which eight children were killed when an apartment building was bombed and demolished. During my visit, I witnessed school children in Ramallah leaving stuffed toys and flowers at the circle in the middle of town, thus creating a makeshift shrine for those who died. I saw evidence of the collapse of the elementary school system because of poor infrastructure in areas of Palestinian Authority control and Israeli occupation.

Prior to this, in 1999, I attended the general assembly of the World Council for Religion and Peace in Amman, Jordan. During the pre-assembly women's caucus, I met a young Palestinian woman who was born and had been raised in a refugee camp in Jordan. As we discussed the lofty ideals of the conference, titled *Action for Common Living: The Role of Religion in Civil Society*, this young woman tearfully shared that what was most necessary for her and those who have been displaced was to experience some basic dignity—for example, to be able to wash for prayer and take the purification baths after her monthly cycle.

In New York City, a microcosm of the world, in Highbridge where this project is located, it is common for human-service providers to encounter persons who are traumatized by conflict and war which they had experienced before migration (and in many instances led to it), along with the emotional effects of migration. In New York City, it is possible, with minimum effort, to locate persons who identify with each of the

many sides of any given conflict in the world—political actors who attempt to persuade and convert supporters, to capture the hearts and minds in the new territory of New York City. In New York City, we also find casualties—survivors— of the original conflict: civilians, everyday citizens, displaced by the conflict, or by manmade or natural disasters, who are attempting to move from mere survival to pursuing some version of the American dream.

The Muslim communities of New York City comprise the most diverse and complex Muslim community in the world. The needs of this population were so pressing that they were a motivating factor, in 1997, to establish the Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development. An unstated aspect of MWIRD’s mission is to support and encourage the scholarship of women of faith, out of a conviction that when women engage the scholarship of their faith traditions they become actors in their own empowerment. MWIRD also strives to meet the transitional needs of new immigrants to New York City. This work is undertaken as an obligation of faith, remembering that at some point in the journeys of the holy Prophets, each one of them was a traveler, a guest, an immigrant, a migrant, or a refugee.

These factors led MWIRD to become a founding partner of the Consultation on Interfaith Education (CIE), a New York City based network whose initial intention was to map the arena of global interfaith education, to learn who was doing what, and to identify gaps on all stages of the education spectrum—a very ambitious undertaking. During the past five years, CIE has convened a consultation on Interfaith Education (2003) and a symposium on the subject for the Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona (2004); currently, CIE is discussing the possibility of linking its work to the UN Millennium

Development Goals. CIE has become a pioneer in a yet uncharted territory. The partners of the network instinctively understand the importance and magnitude of the work being attempted, though we are not always clear or in agreement on how to proceed.

As CIE demonstrates, the people of the world who organize their action around the tenets and teachings of a faith conviction or tradition should not be ignored because of the untidiness of faith, with its unanswered questions; that faith remains an essential component to our exploration of these tasks. Those who pray, reflect, and meditate before acting are necessary voices if any success is to be attained in the exploration of Inter-faith Education and the projects—such as my own work in Highbridge—that grow from it.

## **CHAPTER 2 COMPETENCIES**

The Demonstration process requires that that candidate's Site Team submit a formal evaluation of her competence, and that she respond to this assessment. Here is that assessment; my response follows.

### **SITE TEAM REPORT**

This document is to serve as a competency report for Nurah Amat'ullah. It consists of a personal analysis from each site team member which is intended to evaluate and assess her knowledge, skills, and expertise as a leader of a congregation. The congregation, according to her congregational profile, consists of an organization Ms. Amat'ullah founded and currently serves as Executive Director: the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD), its board of directors, staff, volunteers and the community that it serves.

We have known Ms. Amat'ullah for over fifteen years and have worked closely with her for over ten of those years in various capacities and in many contexts. In varying degrees we have had opportunities to witness her personal and organizational development and trajectory over time. We all are very familiar with her organization, its

board, mission, goals and objectives as well as the community that it serves. The following are some of our personal observations of and reflections on her competencies as a spiritual and professional leader and the challenges that she faces as a prominent personality who actively works in both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The following evaluation and recommendations are based on our knowledge of Ms. Amat'ullah, gained by working with her.

We have collectively and individually attended meetings, conferences, and strategy sessions with Ms. Amat'ullah in the local New York City area; as well as in national and international forums and arenas for several years. We have observed her as an advocate of the hungry and food security programs in New York City; as a lecturer in national Muslim and non-Muslim conferences; as an intellectual in global forums (including the Parliament of the World's Religions in South Africa - 1999 and Barcelona, Spain - 2004) and other international meetings connected with the United Nations. Additionally, she has an extensive portfolio as a spiritual leader in local, national, and international interfaith forums. Therefore, we have witnessed her function in many capacities: as activist, advocate for Muslim women; speaker and organizer. In all of the aforementioned instances she has always exemplified a quality of spiritual and professional leadership which is extraordinary.

Nurah Amat'ullah's unique leadership paradigm represents a combination of academic scholarship and research, faith guided vision coupled with implementation of practical strategies and work which affects and transforms people's lives on an everyday basis. Thus, a natural progression for her leadership was the establishment of MWIRD – the organization which serves to institutionalize her vision.

## **Reflections on Nurah Amat'ullah as a Leader**

### **Assets and Challenges**

There was full consensus that on first meeting Nurah Amat'ullah, one recognizes that she is an exceptional person. The following represents a summary of our views on several aspects of her qualifications and challenges as a leader.

#### ***Assets***

**Spirituality:** Ms. Amat'ullah is a convert to Islam, and she has been able to bring the best of her spiritual and religious convictions from Christianity into Islam. Before her embrace of Islam, she had a personal relationship with God and her conversion continued that quest. Her spirituality is centered in the attributes of love and compassion and not ensconced in the often hard-edged dogma of organized religion. Her experience as a Christian has also equipped her with skills to work in the interfaith community where she is highly respected as a compassionate, caring believer who respects all people, regardless of their faith tradition.

**Service:** Ms. Amat'ullah has always demonstrated a tremendous commitment and dedication to service and embodies the Islamic tradition of the servant-leader—a title she resists, though she fills the role graciously. Endowed with a firm passion to serve the marginalized and a keen sense of justice, she appears at ease, whether in the presence of world leaders or with women in camps in Darfur. Ms. Amat'ullah has dedicated her life to serving the disenfranchised, her impulse to serve emanates directly from her firm belief in God and her deep spirituality which has given her this profound sense of humanity. She is truly gifted.

**Scholarship:** Although Ms. Amat'ullah prefers to be seen as an activist, she is one of the most profound Muslim intellectuals and scholars in America. She is a deep thinker who eschews academia and its often elitist impulse.

**Activism:** Ms. Amat'ullah is informed by her deep love and caring for the entire human family, and demonstrates a kind of Muslim humanism that sees all people as the creation of God and advocates that they deserve to be treated with dignity, love, understanding and compassion. She is actively engaged in several social service programs and projects including: health care (particularly, HIV/AIDS), transitional needs of immigrants, feeding the hungry and working with the poor to meet their basic needs through several food pantries that she has established and civic education.

**Professional Skills and Expertise:** Ms. Amat'ullah has high professional standards and an excellent work ethic that she has maintained throughout her career.

**Organizational Accomplishments:** Within a relatively short period of time, Ms. Amat'ullah has been able to gain the trust and confidence of governmental agencies and officials, leaders of non-profit organizations and particularly the people that she serves. MWIRD is one of very few Muslim organizations that have received funding from governmental agencies and foundations. This is a testament to the way people view her work and commitment to the organization's objectives.

**Interfaith Work:** Ms. Amat'ullah has a long history of interfaith and multi-religious work which spans local, national and international arenas. She has traveled extensively throughout the world presenting scholarly papers, giving lectures, attending consultations and strategy sessions. These activities have prepared her for the task of navigating through the multi-ethnic and religiously diverse communities throughout the world.

## **Challenges**

**The Congregation:** Ms. Amat'ullah's congregation is her organization (its board, staff, volunteers, clients and constituents). This is itself a challenge because it requires re-conceptualizing the way in which congregations have been traditionally viewed.

Therefore, it is argued that there must be a clearly delineated organizational philosophy which defines and articulates the administrative and managerial methods and modalities which she intends to implement that is reflective of this new congregational paradigm.

**Leadership – The Muslim View:** Ms. Amat'ullah is a Muslim leader and a pioneer who is engaged in leadership which is often considered unorthodox by many Muslims. She represents an exception to the way in which the Muslim communities in the United States have generally viewed leadership. Leadership roles for women have been traditionally relegated to specific realms (i.e., education of children, parenting etc.). And although the teachings of Islam have not limited women's role to these spheres, unfortunately, this is a common perspective in the Muslim community. Ms. Amat'ullah has not let this adversely affect her activism or leadership. But, she has been and will be subject to questions and in some cases criticized by her own Muslim community if she does not couch her leadership model within an Islamic exegetical tradition. This requires engaging in a hermeneutical process which will produce a model that is authenticated within the Islamic realm and accepted by Muslims. In addition, Ms. Amat'ullah is an avid advocate of gender equity which often pits her against the traditional interpretation of "the way a Muslim woman should be."

**Leadership – The Non-Muslim View:** Ms. Amat'ullah is a Muslim leader who wears



hijab (traditional covering). She is required to attend high-level meetings with elected officials, UN dignitaries, religious leaders etc. The act of wearing hijab is itself confrontational because it breaks the stereotype of Muslim women being oppressed. She is often faced with questions about her religion which requires her to defend Muslim women.

**Leadership – Administrative and Management:** Ms. Amat’ullah is the founder and Executive Director of the Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD) and has been responsible for its exponential growth and development. Her work spans several areas including interfaith initiatives, social services, activism, and advocacy and encompasses local, national, and international projects and activities. This creates a problem because there is a lack of focus. How are all of her activities linked to her mission, goals and objectives of the organization? She has to develop synergy between the various activities that she is engaged in because her resources both human and financial are limited and she cannot “do all things.”

**Scholarship:** While Ms. Amat’ullah considers herself an activist and a dedicated servant of the community, she is an outstanding scholar and intellectual, therefore, she needs to write more and be more engaged in scholarly discourse where she can articulate her vision and struggle in the world of ideas.

**The Organization:** Based on the sensitivities, sensibilities, views and perspectives of the general Muslim community about women and leadership, it is important that MWIRD reflects this new paradigm in its mission, goals, vision, and objectives. There are numerous examples throughout Muslim history to draw from. This will require developing a new language, a new lexicon, which reflects the organization’s

philosophical approach and methodologies. Nurah has already articulated some of these ideas in her congregational profile. She has the intellectual capabilities to do this. She may not see this as a necessary process, however, we think it is important and strongly recommend it based on experience in the Muslim community.

**Organization Development:** Ms. Amat'ullah has, in a very short period of time, developed a dynamic organization which provides vital direct services to the northern Highbridge community, while reshaping the paradigm of human services. However, based on a review of the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization, and its board structure, like most new organizations, there are several areas that need improvement.

The following represents a cursory analysis of some of the organizational needs:

1. The board of directors should function more effectively.
2. The mission, goals and objectives of the organization are too broadly defined and need to be more focused.
3. The exceptional skills and expertise Ms. Amat'ullah has are not being maximized by the organization. Full use is not being made of her assets.
4. Ms. Amat'ullah's management of staff ("staff is like family") should reflect more of a professional relationship. While she sees her organization as part of her congregation, there still should be clearly defined boundaries and an established balance between professional and congregational relationship. And if "mother, mentor, team builder and boss" is an organizing principle, organizational philosophy, and management strategy, it should be clearly defined and articulated in policy.
5. Ms. Amat'ullah's "radical" inclinations: while it is an asset that allows her

to break the traditional barriers of leadership, it is often a liability when it comes to conforming to policies and procedures. This unbridled spirit creates a lack of respect for bureaucracy and process and should be tempered.

6. In the view of the site team MWIRD is not following a strategic plan nor has it determined a strategic set of priorities which will limit and focus its activities.
7. While programs focus on HIV/AIDS, outreach to the African immigrant population, and focus on disaster response, literacy training and civic education, etc., there is no clearly defined scope and limit of these programmatic thrusts.
8. There needs to be clearly developed and delineated best practices which integrate Islamic practices and best methods of business practices.
9. Customer service is a highly valued asset and often difficult to maintain in the service industry. MWIRD should have clear policies on customer relations and service and it should be part of staff development and training.
10. MWIRD needs more funding. If the executive director is primarily responsible for fundraising and there is no development officer, a consultant should be hired. This will facilitate more capacity building for the organization.

### **Site Team Conclusion**

Nurah Amat'ullah is one of the prominent Muslim leaders in America who has

made significant strides and made major contributions to Muslims and non-Muslims. We feel strongly that she will continue to soar, given the support that she needs in order to actualize the fullness of her potential.

## **CANDIDATE’S RESPONSE**

This response is written after reflecting on conversations with, and the competency reports from, site team members. The reports were completed after a meeting with site team members and mentor Professor McCary. During the meeting, site-team members and I were able to have a meaningful exchange which clarified the role and responsibilities of site team members to a Doctor of Ministry candidate and her Discernment Project. The following are my comments on myself as a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree.

- 1 ***The Congregation:*** I will continue to seek—as an act-of-faith process—to develop skills and effective techniques for outstanding leadership as the Executive Director of a community-based human-service organization. I have an understanding of congregation which expands beyond shared religious creeds and beliefs to include those served by the actions of persons who are guided by the religious creeds and beliefs. This understanding also makes very clear that. In order to lead a life of faith-inspired action, one must be in communion with all of creation. I request the support and guidance of my Site Team, the NYTS faculty and staff, the community served, and my colleagues in the Doctor of Ministry program (Class of 2010) as I strive to avoid “founder’s syndrome”—wherein the individual who originates a project holds it too tightly, never allowing for its growth and development beyond her original vision. Sadly, this is common in the

not-for-profit sector, and leads to irrelevance. The model developed for the Discernment Project will demonstrate a balanced integration of nurturing, discipline, and discovery.

- 2 ***Leadership: The Muslim and non-Muslim View:*** My intention is to identify and develop models of leadership through service which demonstrate values for full civic participation shared by all communities of faith. I will find more effective means to articulate and communicate my calling (which is MWIRD) and to address the shared concern of Site Team members that the scope of work I take on as the leader of MWIRD is too eclectic or too wide in scope. Working with the Site Team on this project will also be an opportunity to test the model of prophetic vision and mission as a corporate endeavor. The process will address how to fully include others in one's calling. I will also work to stay true to my inner guide while maintaining credibility and relevance in the Muslim communities of New York City and build on the profitable returns of my social network (capital) with non-Muslims.
- 3 ***Scholarship:*** Although I view scholarship as much more than that which is written, I commit to writing more. This I have done with some measure of success. For example, two of my op-ed pieces have been published: in *The Muslim Journal* (a national publication) and *Black Star News* (an electronic publication). This increased commitment to writing will be balanced with the creative process of teaching and learning from the unlettered whom I serve. To accomplish this goal and strengthen my abilities in this area, I will draw heavily on the process of asserting a personal hermeneutics developed while participating

in the Critical Interpretation Seminar of the Doctor of Ministry program.

In 2008, I was granted the opportunity to participate in the Executive Fellows Program implemented by the United Way of New York City. This nine-month leadership development and individual coaching program for executives of small- and medium-sized not-for-profit organizations includes the 360 Feedback Executive Coaching program, through which a participant from up to fifteen reviewers he or she has selected. I selected fifteen persons from various parts of my life and with whom I have very different relationships. This group includes all of my site team members; the others serve as an auxiliary site-team for my discernment project. I experience this fellowship opportunity, a structured environment to address the three competencies identified earlier, as a blessing from Allah. In addition to the fifteen persons working with me in the 360 Feedback process, I receive feedback from the other nineteen fellows in the program on my discernment project.

The feedback process and the fellows program have provided a structured, safe environment in which to effectively address the challenges identified by site-team members in their ministerial competencies reports. I am of the opinion that I have had impressive success in meeting most of the challenges identified.

*Alhamdulillah* (All praises to God)!

### **CHAPTER 3 PLACING ME**

I have embraced a faith-tradition different from the one I was socialized into in my early life. In my early childhood I was baptized an Anglican (Episcopalian) Christian, and when I became a teenage mother I began attending my local community's Anglican Church regularly and began to study the tenets of the Anglican Church. While growing up I had enjoyed a very eclectic religious education which included participation in Catholic Catechism, Pentecostal Bible School, Seventh-day Adventist youth group, and the feasts of the Shouter Baptists—the Yoruba-style indigenous religion of Trinidad. However, in a primal sense, my faith—that which I believe—has been continuous throughout my life, shaped and transformed by experience and learning.

As a mature adult in New York City, I embraced Islam; I became a Muslim. To “Muslim” I added the qualifier “Sunni” after the United States’ illegal invasion of Iraq and ensuing orchestrated civil war. Years of study in a Christian seminary and the current geo-political climate seemed to demand it. During the first twelve years of my Islamic journey, this qualifier had not been necessary.

A central reason for my migration away from being a practicing Episcopalian to become a practicing Muslim is Islam’s teaching of the oneness of the Divine. Islam

teaches that God is a supreme entity with no partners. Coupled with this is Islam's teaching that it is the responsibility of each person to cultivate a personal, familiar relationship with Allah. Uninterrupted throughout my life, I have had conversations with God. These conversations have been a permanent source of comfort, awe, guilt and motivation. Yet I had lived for a long time with the theological dilemma of not being able to accept the Anglican Church's teaching that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate nor the concept of the Trinity. It had often been conveyed to me that, though I was a worker in the church, I was not a (good) Christian or Episcopalian because of this dilemma. This led me to view my earnest and devout conversations with God as being flawed.

My conversations with God were never routed through Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary. My conversations were directly to and with God—the God of my familiar, the God creatively captured by Alice Walker in her novels *Temple of My Familiar* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.<sup>5</sup> Many Christians and Muslims would argue that this type of envisioning of the Divine made me more a closet Muslim than a Christian.

Since I was apparently not a “real” Christian, as I was taught to be, in spite of my intimate relationship with the Divine, I often questioned my spiritual/religious existence. I questioned my belonging. I still live with the always present sense of not belonging. The notion of being in the world but not of the world holds special meaning for me, because I often wonder if the world, all of creation, could be my faith community—all of creation in contrast to the very narrow and limited understandings of community, bordered by religion, nationality, race, gender, or any of the other very small spaces that

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<sup>5</sup> Alice Walker, *Temple of My Familiar* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1990)

-----, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1992).



will only allow for a similarly small *me*. At times I understand faith to be belonging to that which is greater than oneself—a belonging that is possible only when there is a total surrender, which occurs only when there is complete and absolute trust. Amina Wadud calls it the *engaged surrender*, where full human agency is employed in the individual's transactional relationship with the Divine. Only then can faith be experienced, only then can the blessing of faith be received.<sup>6</sup>

My thought, then, is that my difference in understanding, my sense of not belonging as a result of my conversations with the Divine—conversations without which the experience of faith will not be granted—is a good thing, a blessing. In my conversations, I trust completely the One I talk to and with. This is the beginning of my surrender, the beginning of being a part of that which is greater than myself. In Surah 49:14, the Qu`ran instructs us that one should say that we hear and we obey, and not say that we believe—for faith has not entered our hearts. Believing is then understood to require faith—the blessing that is granted or earned through the mercy of the Divine, coupled with the acquisition of knowledge and acting on the knowledge received. It is in obeying the guidance, the instruction, the inspiration that one is granted faith, which leads one to believe. Therefore, I obey in the hope that one day I may believe.

I view my life as a most sacred and precious trust from Allah; however, it is often a trust, over which I am not always a diligent steward. This failing can be attributed to many things—one being ignorance. I just do not know what to do, nor how to do what needs to be done. At times the lack of action is due to my own rebelliousness, which leads to

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<sup>6</sup> Wadud, *Inside the Gender*, 23 “In this respect, engaged surrender emphasizes the requisite role of human agency. It is conscious recognition of choice and exercising that choice as an agent, not a puppet.”

straying from the path of righteousness to sinful actions, thoughts and deeds; or to freezing, becoming inactive. I experience periods of wrong action and inaction, both experiences result in separation from self and from the Divine –Allah. Then I reflect that even these moments are components of my conversations with Allah; they illustrate that even at my most distant moments Allah is always with me. In the midst of my separations from myself, from me—from the God within—Allah the provider is the mechanism for peace, return, forgiveness and reconciliation within my being/self, and ultimately with the Source of all that is.

The preceding paragraphs capture a central teaching of Islam, as it has manifested in my life. Islam teaches that birth is not just a separation from the womb; it is also the beginning of our separation from Allah (God). We are all born in complete connectedness to and in unity with Allah. As we move through life we often move further away from Allah with the exception of those of us who are guided to a path that seeks or leads to be re-united with – the face of Allah. This unity demands a letting go, a turning away from, a rejection of, the negation of all else. One must forsake all else and cling to the Divine, for it is only by so doing can one be able to embrace all, to experience faith and one's own divinity.

In November of 1991, at the northern side of Central Park in New York City in the presence of family and friends, I publicly made my *shahadah*—the declaration that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet and messenger and the seal of the prophets; along with the affirmation and commitment to be diligent in executing the other four pillars of Islam. This verbal articulation marked my entry into a psychological and spiritual abyss—the transition from being an active practicing

Episcopalian to being a resident of Islamic purgatory. My family and friends, old and new, biological and faith, continued to be supportive of the external aspects of my conversion. They supported my decision to wear hijab (the covering of my hair and modest dress in public), to adhere to the Islamic diet and become a student of dynamic scholarship of Islam. I had stepped out of the familiar into that which was often talked about but not known. I had stepped into a space where I believe the tools and skills of religious ritual that I had developed were no longer useful in that they would not provide access to the anticipated treasures of this new space and this new God.

Then I had an epiphany. I came to the understanding that my conversation partner is the universal God, the God of all that exist, the same with whom I had walked and talked with through the years. This universal Divine—Allah—was/is the playwright and director of the script of my transition from one religious tradition to another. All I needed to ease my anxiety was to continue to surrender to Divine guidance—to force myself open to the divinity of all of creation and to embrace a truth that the destination and my life with all of its component parts is a whole; it is my journey to the Divine.

I am often asked why I continue on this path—attempting to live a faithful life with all my joys and contradictions. Simply stated: I HAVE NO CHOICE. At times, because of life's many challenges, I experience being human as a curse. I think it would be so much easier to be either completely sinful or sinless; but then I would not be human. One teaching of Islam is that the gift of being human is the highest blessing that can be bestowed on any creature. This gift includes the gift of *power*, which is human dominion over the rest of creation, as demonstrated in a early task given to Adam, to

name the rest of creation.<sup>7</sup> Naming and language are powerful tools. Though at times the responsibilities of this gift are difficult, I am grateful for having been granted this blessing.

## **PUBLIC PRACTICE: GOOD WORKS AND KNOWLEDGE**

The Islamic tradition provides charges and instructions from Allah, documented in the Qur'an and the subsequent texts it has inspired. Two of these charges are to do good works and to seek knowledge. The following verses from the Qur'an (as translated by Pickthal) are examples of these instructions:

### ***Seeking Knowledge***

Those unto whom We have given the Scripture, who read it with the right reading, those believe in it. And whoso disbelieveth in it, those are they who are the losers. (2.121).

Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender (to His Will and Guidance). Those who (formerly) received the Scripture differed only after knowledge came unto them, through transgression among themselves. Whoso disbelieveth the revelations of Allah (will find that) lo! Allah is swift at reckoning. (3.19)

They are losers who besottedly have slain their children without knowledge, and have forbidden that which Allah bestowed upon them, inventing a lie against Allah. They indeed have gone astray and are not guided. (6.140)

Verily, we have brought them a Scripture which We expounded with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. (7.52)

### ***Good Works***

And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) unto those who believe and do good works; that theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow; as often as they are regaled with food of the fruit thereof, they say: this is what was given us aforetime; and it is given to them in resemblance. There for them are pure companions; there forever they abide. (2.25)

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<sup>7</sup> Wadud, *Inside the Gender*, 54.

Lo! Allah disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of a gnat. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What doth Allah wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby, and He guideth many thereby; and He misleadeth thereby only miscreants. (2.26)

Lo! those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love. (19.96)

Some see seeking knowledge and doing good works as mutually exclusive. In my attempt to live a faithful life, I aim to no longer separate these two acts of faith. I argue that in doing good works there is valuable knowledge to be had that will fortify our being as we continue on our journey of life. Indeed, I understand all of our actions are acts of faith (strong, weak or none at all). They are important to the totality of being human, and particularly being a practicing Muslim.

I am often asked what the role of faith is in my life. To me faith is an essential intangible that is as real and as necessary as the air that I breathe. My faith transcends the boundaries of my chosen faith-tradition: Islam. However, my faith is not yet fully realized or attained. My faith, the little that I have been granted, connects me to my grandmothers, all of whom are devout practitioners of some faith traditions (although none of the immediate ones practice Islam). What I share with each of them collectively is this “Real God” that is our own—the God of our familiar—who instigates, supports, sustains, confronts and comforts our life journeys, our paths of independence and defiance, resulting and manifesting in generations of maverick women. When we are not grounded in our connection to the Divine, we women go adrift in the world, becoming free radicals or wild cards, with the potential to self-destruct—which we have been known to do at times.

As a practicing Muslim, I strongly resonate with Allah's charge to Muslims to leave humanity better than we have found it. I have sought ways to put my faith into action through the establishment of MWIRD. At the Institute we work to address the transitional needs of new immigrants and the social service needs of community members in neighborhoods of the southwest Bronx in New York City. The most recognizable attributes of these neighborhoods are that they are the best examples of urban decay and governmental neglect. The work of the MWIRD aims to provide services that lead to the empowerment of community members and stake-holders, while raising awareness of the creativity and genius of those living with and in institutionally created and systemic poverty. Our actions to respond to basic human and social needs is coupled with an effort—developed from our understanding and practice of good citizenship—to have Islam and Muslims in the United States become a foundational part of the mosaic of ecclesiastic work, pastoral care and faith-based community service in the broader society.

Through its programs and services, MWIRD provides a platform for a multifaceted vision of practicing Muslim professional women who are Western in cultural and social identity, and who hold a strong sense of moral and ethical responsibility for addressing or correcting local social and economic injustice. This is very much in keeping with the mantra which emerged from the NGO component of the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference: *Think globally, act locally*.<sup>8</sup> Our local response to human need is attached to our commitment to support and encourage women of faith in their efforts to research and study events and policies that impact our communities on all

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<sup>8</sup> *Think Globally, Act Locally* was reportedly coined by David Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth, as the slogan for FOE when it was founded in 1969; however, others have stated it originated with Rene Dubos, an advisor to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in 1972. <http://en.wikipedia.org> (accessed March 10, 2009).

levels. With this vision, more women of faith will become full participants in policy making processes within our faith communities and within the centers and institutions of civil society.

## **STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES**

I am a woman of African descent, who works as an archival librarian at the premiere institute in the world for the documenting of the experiences and culture of people of African descent: The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. I am a Muslim woman who chooses to wear *hijab* (headcovering and modest dress) to comply with the Islamic tradition that women past puberty cover their hair and dress modestly in public spaces and in the presence of marriageable males. I am the founder and executive director of The Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development. All of my identities and activities occur on the tightly woven fabric of Islam.

In the cultural and social spaces where I live and work, many of which are public, there is little or no support for my personal decision to wear hijab. I do not live in a community of Muslims; my workplace is not Islamic; and my network of interaction on behalf of MWIRD is primarily with non-Muslims in settings that are not Islamic. In my average day—which begins with the dawn prayer (one of five required daily prayers for Muslims), I have perhaps three hours of interaction with Muslims—and the bulk of that is with my nuclear family.

I spend eight to nine hours a day, three days a week, at the Schomburg Center library, with an average of three hours a day on the reference desk serving a diverse patron population. In that workplace, my contact with Muslims accounts for less than ten-percent of all my human encounters.

The work of being the executive director of MWIRD places me in various public spaces as an ambassador or spokesperson on behalf of segments of the Muslim community—especially Muslim women—and other women of faith. These spaces of interaction are often secular; at times I have even experienced them as anti-Islamic and anti-religious. Every public appearance with my hijab makes me identifiably Muslim and subject to all of American society's sentiments, biases and ignorance about my chosen faith and the people who adhere to it. Sadly, some of this even comes from within the Islamic community.

My hijab has allowed me to remove my body from public display and has forced my human interactions to be premised in an arena other than the physical; it also allows me to experience my body as sacred and private. The hijab gives me ownership of my body; I decide who I share it with and how I share it. This I experience as empowerment. The external hijab helps one develop the more valued hijab: the internal one – the hijab of the heart, which is strived for by men and women with equal passion because it is believed to place one closer to Allah.<sup>9</sup>

Life as I have experienced it most often has placed me on the fringes of the social, cultural and political contexts that I must navigate daily. My existence on the margins, paired with my conversations with God, generates a tangible sense that there is an unseen force directing the events of my life. My hurdles, set-backs, and defeats are painful. For example, when I was awarded a full fellowship to pursue a Ph.D. degree, my marriage dissolved; yet a mere five semesters later, I had come to realize that I did not want the

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<sup>9</sup> Wadud, *Inside the Gender*, 177 “My dress choice has radical, self-inscribed meaning – not apparent to an outside observer. While it appears to conform to the fixed and uniform position of a Muslim woman's persons, it also defies that position.”



degree I was pursuing nor to be at the institution I was attending. I did not want to be there for two reasons. Firstly, I did not believe the theories and philosophies that we being presented were the only viable ones; and this belief was not acceptable to the institution. Secondly, and more painfully, the publicness of my faith, my wearing of hijab, was rejected by the human community of the institution. It seemed that the seeking of knowledge, central to my life and faith, required the modification or rejection of my beliefs in ways that I was not willing to do.

Experiences like this, and I have had many, cause feelings of devastation and hurt when they first occur, and again when I remember them. However, I can also relish my accomplishments, joys, and gifts—some tangible and some not. I have been welcomed into many small ethnic communities in West Africa, thereby experiencing the roots of the diversity that MWIRD serves in the Bronx. I have been able to enjoy a sunset on the shores of the Dead Sea (on the Jordanian side)—my most public private moment. Such experiences have filled me with awe at their unexpectedness and perfection. They are always exactly what I needed at the time—even when I was not aware of my need.

I am not always conscious of Islam as a duty or a protocol when I am in the public space. I embrace each day with an internal, private, intimate conversation with Allah—which is like having a bosom buddy, a personal companion. Then there are the days when I go adrift—when I experience muteness or when my conversations are interrupted. However, I am always able to catch hold of the eternal truth that it all comes from Allah, the ease and the challenges. I still believe because I am still living; I would not be able to live without my faith. There is so much I do not know, cannot know. My developing faith allows me to be okay with not knowing.

## PUBLIC ACTIVISM

On moving to the United States, I lived with relatives. The level of poverty and disconnectedness from the society and the community in which they lived, and which I joined, scared me. My fear drove me to act on my faith by participating in community efforts at the church I attended; it marked the birth of my spiritual activism in the U.S. I say *spiritual*, as oppose to *religious*, because my spiritual activism has continued and is still present many years into my embrace of Islam.

I have come to know the names of many fellow travelers over the years whose mission or ministry has been to put their faith into action in the arena of the mundane, everyday events of their lives and in all the spaces in which their lives unfold. This great jihad—the battle with oneself, against one’s desires—is an internal spiritual wrestling that demands painful honesty, an effort at putting our faith into action.<sup>10</sup> It is documented in our struggles to speak the truth even if it be against oneself—living with a sincere diligent self-interrogation of our own actions.<sup>11</sup> Among those I have come to know through their writings or as mentors who exemplify this teaching include Amina Wadud, Ingrid Mattson, Riffat Hassan, Rabia Terry Harris, Farid Esack, Miriam Therese Winter, Ella Baker, Claudia Jones, Alice Walker, and James Baldwin.

We all walk this path of living our faith in each moment of the everyday. For some named here faith is not premised in any religious tradition. Among us there is no

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<sup>10</sup> William Stoddart, *Sufism: the Mystical Doctrines and Methods of Islam*. 33 The Prophet (Muhammad) indicated the relationship of these two aspects of struggle when he remarked to his companions following a battle: ‘We are returning from the lesser battle (against our outward enemies), to the greater battle (against ourselves, our desires)!’

<sup>11</sup> See Qur’an 4:135.

record of a demonstrated sense of choosiness premised in our faith; we have however displayed a humility that comes from seeing oneself reflected in the other, in all of creation, and loving that otherness without demanding that it change. We also share a sense of community that grows from shared struggle and the wisdom of solidarity in struggle.

Nowhere in my life is this point of the divinity of the other captured more accurately than in the work that MWIRD does at the food pantry in the Bronx. The majority of persons we serve at the food pantry have lived in the United States for less than ten years. Most of our clients are women who do not speak English and have little or no social capital in the environment that is now their home. We serve all who express a need for emergency food and hunger relief regardless of religious affiliation; most of the persons we serve are not Muslims.

My obligations as a Muslim are expressed in the following passage from the Qur'an:

And feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan and the prisoner, for love of Him, (Saying): We feed you, for the sake of Allah only. We wish for no reward nor thanks from you; Lo! We fear from our Lord a day of frowning and of fate. Therefore Allah hath warded off from them the evil of that day, and hath made them find brightness and joy; and hath awarded them for all that they endured, a Garden and silk attire. (Qur'an 76: 8-12)

The mandate to welcome the traveler; feed the hungry, to be compassionate to the indigent—when combined with the American cultural value and practice of welcoming the immigrant (although it is not always extended in the same way to people of color)—allows us at MWIRD to extend the love and hospitality of Islam from our tent in the Bronx: the food pantry.

While we at MWIRD and others like us do not demand changes in which the other becomes us, we use our spiritual activism and knowledge to seek and agitate for changes that lead to justice and equality for all. We strive for intra-faith and inter-faith changes in the faith and other communities we belong to. These fellow travelers of this path (some I have personal relationships with) act as the benchmark of my own spiritual activism. They have set the bar, which I now attempt to attain.

## **ARTICULATING FAITH**

How does one discuss faith, one's understanding and application of it in one's life, not as a theological construct, but as a force or inspiration to action? For me, such discussions are infrequent and extremely difficult. In her book, *The Singer and the Song*, Miriam Therese Winter documents this challenge as it occurs in her life. "Religion can carry us forward," she says, "or it can preach a false security that justifies standing still as we pay lip service through lifeless forms to obsolete theologies. . . . There is always more than one way to get to where we are going, as long as we look for God in those graced encounters along the way."<sup>12</sup>

I have found that discussions of the application of faith in the practitioner's everyday life tend to evoke emotional response with little instructional or informational value. I would attribute this to the faith experience being beyond the spoken word and being beyond religion. As with the human senses, there are very complex theories about the mechanics of faith—how faith works and the likelihood that it may not work in the same way for each person. Although we have some general knowledge of how our bodies

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<sup>12</sup> Miriam Theresa Winters, *The Singer and the Song*, 24.

work in regard to our senses, I do not believe that individuals spend much time thinking about how our senses work or how our faith works. We know that our senses are operational—most times, automatically or by reflex. My faith is very much like any other sense. It is there; it is drawn on by reflex; it happens while everything else is happening in my life. As with my other senses, the ways in which I receive, understand or recall the messages and instructions of my faith are often not conscious.

There is a parallel dimension to this intuitive, reflexive, and unconscious faith: a studied and intentional, educated faith. Educated faith calls Muslims (possibly all persons of faith) to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave—a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). It should be noted that there are no gender restrictions on this call (nor on observance of the Pillars of Islam). It is applicable to all—male and female. Islam in its teachings and early history mandated, encouraged, and supported the scholarship and education of women in matters of religion and civil society—including public administration, governance and social welfare, and service. From the advent of the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) through to present times, there have been women across cultures who have become public figures because they acted on their knowledge and faith. I am, therefore, one of many.

Faith, a necessary intangible of my life, is a tool. I am convinced that it has opened many doors for me and those whom I serve. It is a tool without which I would not be here. My faith has answered so much of the unexplainable, while allowing an openness of mind and heart enabling me as I travel the earth to embrace and be embraced by many. My faith has allowed me to be in awe of the deep faith passion, of illiterate

persons that practice many literature based faith-traditions. This makes for a very strong argument that faith is not about texts or literacy, and should be considered as the manifestation of another way of knowing. My faith permits me to be graced by the simplicity of the divine beauty that is a central component of all that exists. I am truly grateful for being able to experience this beauty, which then strengthens and expands my faith.

### **A FAITH JOURNEY IN LEARNING**

I enjoy the process of seeking knowledge (in the structured setting of the classroom), a charge to Muslims from Allah, and a charge that I accept. In June 2002, while not working for a salary (having been laid-off due to the economic effects on New York City of the atrocities of September 11, 2001), I was invited to participate in a week-long seminar on Islamic pastoral care at Hartford Seminary. The course was part of the newly instituted Islamic Chaplaincy Graduate Certificate Program. This opportunity arose just one month after attending the STAR (Seminars in Trauma Awareness and Resilience) Program at Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA), and in the middle of an eight-week seminar on faith-based non-profit management offered at the New School for Management and Urban Policy, sponsored by J. P. Morgan Chase.

Coming two years after having left a Ph.D. program, and being my first real venture into the academy since then, I was apprehensive; but I went. By the end of the first day, I felt like a desert traveler at an oasis, having encountered a mirage and survived. My appetite was stimulated; the suppressed hunger for knowledge burst forth. I enrolled in the Chaplaincy program and successfully completed it. In October 2003, I

became the first person to graduate from the Islamic Chaplaincy Program at Hartford Seminary. Studying at Hartford Seminary was the most inspiring and uplifting experience of my life. This I attribute to being able to have all of the pieces of myself present, to being able to have a safe space to unpack my contradictions and paradoxes as I pursued knowledge. From that experience, I concluded that I need to be in spaces, academic or otherwise, where my faith is acknowledged and respected.

## **HERE I STAND**

As a person responsible for founding and currently operating a faith-based, human service, community organization, issues of meaning, order, power, solidarity, and (I will add) inter- and multi-faith are always present as religious, political and ideological battlegrounds. The prominence Islam bestows on community, as with all things, is understood in a given context and varies from person to person, group to group and geographic location to geographic location. The understanding of community is also colored by other determinants like textual interpretations and one's school of legal thought.

Daniel C. Maguire captures the challenges to faithful interaction in a pluralistic society, in a globalize world: "It is not that we know nothing of other religions. We have impressions of them, but they are like photos taken from far away. They are more caricatures than pictures, and sometimes when the truth arrives about these religions, we resist it."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions*. 107.

One aim of the organization I founded is to demonstrate Islam's teaching that Muslims are the vicegerents of Allah (or, as the angels at the creation of humankind warned, *mischievous makers* on the earth), with the responsibilities to be caregivers to all of creation. Staying true to this mission/vision in the pluralistic society of urban New York has required transcending intra- and interfaith boundaries. The reward has been to carve out spaces of interpretation and contextualization to create holy mischief in the service of a small portion of humanity as we seek the mercy of God. What a joy!

As a Muslim woman of African descent who is daring enough to step out of my defined space/role, not knowing my place is a very dangerous practice that has become a habit for me—a habit which can result in losing my life (a sad but true reality even today). Here again is a paradox of my human existence. These very factors—being a woman of African descent and Muslim—are sources of spiritual uplift, insight, inspiration and joy which I am not always able to articulate, but which empower and motivate me to action. My greatest hardship continues to be being human, because of all its paradoxes and contradictions. Unlike the academic mind, which strives to solve paradoxes, the scholar-activist who is also a person of faith embraces, learns, and when necessary, surrenders to the paradox because we know, we trust, we believe that all will be well. We trust in God.

This development has been easy because it involves doing, action, physical work which at times involves some intellectual efforts. The work of articulating theological and scriptural interpretations which motivate a faith-process of holistic healing, liberation, and justice is however my challenge—my mountain to climb. In the climbing, I face my fears of undeservedness.



During this my first semester as a student in the Multi-Faith Track of New York Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program, I was called a scholar by my classmates and colleagues, my site-team, and persons in the local Muslim communities. This was scary. I am not well-read and had major challenges in keeping up with readings. That being said, I hold the strong belief that I have acquired valuable knowledge in my life's journey outside the written text. This is where I appeal for a valued respectful inclusion of other ways of knowing, where I ask that the required articulation of a personal hermeneutical inventory allow for those processes of knowledge- and wisdom-cultivation that occur independent of, or in partnership with, the text.

I am now questioning my own fear of the label of scholar. My simple and possibly flawed logic is that the investment necessary to be a scholar in any one subject limits one from exploring or learning about so many other things. Because I am curious about all of creation and how we are connected, I work to remain open to as much of life as is possible. I am, however, not open to ignorance and the absence of critical thought.

I live and work in an environment where the pursuits of knowledge and or wisdom have been usurped by job-training, where even scholarship is a market commodity. This another example that causes me to recall a public conversation I attended between scholars Michael Lerner and Cornell West, authors of the book *Race Matters*. During this event, Dr. West made the grand claim that the United States of America had a culture of success. What was absent from this accurate claim was the explanation that all components of American culture become commodities: that to which a value can be attached and traded. Even scholarship is peddled in the marketplace, as is faith. .

In this reality, my romanticized notions about seeking knowledge are questionable. Am I holding on to some hard-wired, short-circuit belief that in some full union with the divine I will experience a full epiphany of me/self, come to know me fully, and thereby come to know God—the ultimate knowledge? The articulating of the wanderings through one’s thoughts, through the many rooms of the individual’s mind, may call to mind an image of the all-consumed mad scientist. Claiming neither insanity nor scientific prowess, I shrink away from any public recognition for the work of my journeys, hoping that they will stand independent of my input.

Most inquiry and scholarly discourse of our times, in the culture of modernity and post-modernity, asserts an unquestioned premise of reason as superior to intuition or other forms of thought processes and visioning—thereby rendering other ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge as flawed or inferior. There is a saying: “Those who can, do; while those who can’t, teach.” A similar analogy can be made regarding the observance of religion/faith practices versus the academic study of religion/faith practice by those who are not observant. They walk a tightrope of challenges, they who are observant practitioners *and* who engage in the academic study of their own faith practices and those of others without judging those who are different.

How can one commit to a ministry of liberation and its theology when the scholarship of liberation is now rendered defunct? I suggest we heed the many warnings of fad ministries and theologies that the enduring ministries of compassion which encourage acts of service (satisfaction of the basic human need for food, clothing, shelter, safety, and education) are enough. I argue that the fad ministries and theologies are denials of our failure to fulfill our covenant, of our failure to be ministers of compassion

and our complicity in the globalization process. A ministry of empowerment may prove to be of greater effect than those of liberation.

In his article, “Theological Education at the Intersection of City, Church and Academy,” Lester Edwin J. Ruiz asserts his conviction that those of us who engage in the processes of teaching and learning in institutions of higher education need to embrace our passions so that we may be compassionate and show love as we enjoy the rapture of ecstasy which leaves one standing outside oneself and ready to act beyond one’s self interest for the common good.<sup>14</sup>

I have grown to understand that believing does not automatically mean that one will belong, and that belonging is neither a prerequisite nor a promised reward for believing. For me, believing has rendered me an insider/outsider: in my biological family, because I am the only one who currently practices Islam; in the Muslim community, because I question, and because I implement a model faith-leadership characterized by being the best servant; in the professional spaces I occupy, often uninvited, because I am different.

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<sup>14</sup> Lester Edwin Ruiz. “Theological Education at the Intersection of City, Church and Academy.” Developed from a presentation made in 2002.

## CHAPTER 4

### NAMING: Self-definition, a missing tool

A very early story in the revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), thus in the history of humankind involves Allah (God of all things), Adam (God's first prophet); and Iblis (the jealous angel who became Satan):

And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful. They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise. He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide. And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever. And We said: O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat ye freely (of the fruits) thereof where ye will; but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers. But Satan caused them to deflect there from and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were; and We said: Fall down, one of you a foe unto the other! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time. *Surah 2: 30-25*<sup>15</sup>

A different telling of this story occurs in the Old Testament:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. And the man gave names to

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<sup>15</sup> The Glorious Qur'an, Surah 2: 30-35, translation Pickhall, Muhammad.

all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. *Genesis 2:18-20*<sup>16</sup>

A common element of both stories is the Prophet Adam being taught or naming the rest of creation. This presents the first recorded paradox of being human: Prophet Adam is empowered by the naming process, a first demonstration of free will; however, he becomes the target for corruption, for being led astray by Iblis.

The telling of these stories become overwhelmingly important as it became necessary to name the issue this project addresses. An often overlooked factor in all human endeavors is the power of language. The power given or asserted by the one who names is not generally given deliberate consideration, nor is the power imbalance it creates.

Another factor that demands consideration in all social science/ human service research, projects and programs is culture. The following definition of culture best fits the approach this project will take to name/identify the problem to be addressed as the work or outcome of this project:

Every culture has two main functions, to interpret and to conduct life (*hermeneutical and ethical function*). Culture in the broad sense includes non-material aspects (world-view, religion, tradition, values, science and technology) and material ones (technological products, arts, handicrafts, and the like). The hermeneutic-ethical framework, particularly for the non-material aspects is, on one hand, always the heritage of historical collective experience. On the other hand, it shapes the common life in the society: it appears and manifests itself in the social mentality, structures and institutions. Without culture as the hermeneutico-ethical system, human beings can neither live nor find emotional security and peace. They will feel and be submerged in total chaos.<sup>17</sup>

This definition challenges a commonly held perception that the poor of the world have created and are responsible for their condition of impoverishment. Rather, it asserts that the

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<sup>16</sup> The Holy Bible, Genesis 2: 18-20.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr99/chap10.htm> (accessed September, 2009).

impoverished are products of the culture in which they exist, as is the faith one practices. Faith is always contextual; it always has a relation to its cultural environment. In much the same way, poverty is always a socio-cultural reality in which faith is lived. Understanding culture is a requirement of a faith which claims to be concerned with poverty. The importance of this understanding cannot be overstated by faith workers committed to transformation in the poverty arena, one neighborhood at a time.

The process of identification, the culture of one, at times, can be as complex and complicated as culture, the communal processes, practices and rituals that are shared by a group of people connected by lineage, geography or faith. In groups with a significant number of illiterate individuals, the method often employed to analyze, document and communicate culture and identity is dialogue.

This simple and apparently clear defining of culture, identity and dialogue when actualized (by motion/action) in the multi-boxed screen of a globalized, mobile, media-driven world is overwhelming. It connects and isolates in new ways that disrupt and interrupt our understanding of self, others and the places and spaces in which we exist. This reflection relates directly to the culture-and-identity seminar of the Multi-Faith Track of the NYTS Doctor of Ministry Program. More broadly, it attempts to articulate the unpacking, the grappling of/with self-identification—that which remains private and not shared and that which is shared, often modified, based on audience and location.

Here one begins to enter the realm of an emerging academic space of performance or performing identity. When identity, understood as self definition, is a process of faith (the knowing of oneself so that one may come to know thy Lord), one then experiences life (our uncommunicated private self as being a castaway with an intense, unexplainable

urge to survive, to make it to some unknown destination for some or many unknown reasons).

The complexity of language and the challenges it lays before faith and identity are many. In the context of the USA, many will argue that all women, including those in religious communities, are a minority or a disempowered group. In the public and media space, would the prevalent image and understanding of an ordained Christian minister who is female and ethnically Korean construe her as a member of the majority, or of the minority?

Issues surrounding markers of identity are: how does the individual articulate one's self; how one is labeled/identified by others, particularly those accepted and identified with the dominant group of that context; and how do both articulations feed each other? In the United States, social positioning determines the level of access, power, and influence exerted in the social context. For Muslims, these facts are not always known or not clear.

The matter of language and its use for institutional power maintenance must also be considered. The word 'minority' as defined in the English language can be either a noun or adjective that relates to a group of people that are a smaller part of a larger group. In common usage in the USA. The word is not neutral. It indicates comparison among similar persons, where one group—the dominant group—is understood to be superior, and as a result enjoys higher socio-political/economic/religious/cultural status in a given context. This even occurs at times when the dominant group is smaller in numbers.

The challenge of language is manifested in constructs like *Islam versus the West*—where a global faith tradition is positioned antagonistically with a geographical location. Using a fixed and limited boundary to define a universal term restricts the endless

possibilities of the tradition and the limitless potential of the practitioners of the tradition. This raises the question: does this agenda of restricting Islam to a specific boundary have anything to do with the fact that it is the faith-tradition adhered to by most of the people in the southern hemisphere, overwhelmingly people of color?

Language provides expression in tidy categories for the boundary-less mess of being human. Language is also the mechanism through which the godliness of humans, our power within creation, is demonstrated. In the Islamic creation story, humanity is granted authority/power to name creation, along with a built in bonus: the capacity to challenge and defy the Creator. The result of this first sharing of power—where ultimate Power is challenged by the created—is defiance. Until that point, all other creatures were content to worship the Creator. Naming and language lead to defying boundaries, hence the eating from the tree and the discovery of the capacity to negotiate. The ability to name demands voice and autonomy.

A discourse on this topic is not possible without a back story. The magnitude and complexity of the back story is an intellectual challenge to communicate and thereby becomes the topic. In the context of urban America, the socio-economic, socio-political, socio-sexual (gender) subsystems are support-pillars of the anchoring beam of socio-racism—the framing lenses of all that occurs in the institutions of United States where culture and social norms are manufactured. All of this must be investigated before the identity marker or label of “minority” can be engaged in a manner that will lead to a productive exchange. This is an attempt to present a brief summation of the back story on the subsystems as many have experienced them in the context of urban America: the immediate demands made on anyone entering the United States; the mandatory placing and



receiving of identity markers; the insignificance of self-identification in the culture and societies of the United States; the politics of the label or category of minority within this context; and the challenge to all of us, especially people of faith, to be diligent and discerning in the ways in which we present “who we are” to ourselves and others, and in what language we choose to communicate.

The socio-economic subsystem in the United States is used to support the dominant group in its position of domination while a parallel structure of economic ignorance is cultivated and harvested. The United States is the only economy in the world where individuals have materials goods beyond their needs—which indicate their access to money (cash or credit)—yet, often simultaneously, are not being able to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. This would not be alarming if it occurred only with isolated individuals; however, when it is the prevailing norm in entire communities, one then begins to suspect a devious intentional social design.

In the same context, the socio-political subsystem presents an illusion of a democracy with “all being equal”: one person, one vote. Alas, this has never been so. Throughout this nation’s turbulent history, the dominant group has always implemented and maintained processes whereby marginalized groups have encountered major challenges, threat of physical harm, and at times even death when they attempted to exercise their inalienable right to live as full citizens and vote. Voting is said to be the epitome of American citizen power, despite the fact that less than 65 percent of all eligible voters participate in presidential elections.<sup>18</sup> Wealth and access to the seats of power have always enjoyed a stronger voice than the vote in the United States.

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<sup>18</sup> (1960-2004) - Compiled by Gerhard Peters from data obtained from the Federal Election Commission.

Socio-sexual (gender) marginality operates to further divide those on the periphery. The fact that it took fifty years to clarify that women's rights are human's rights speaks sadly to how we women in the United States view ourselves. When the American feminist movement emerged in the 1970s, as a backlash to the ethnic- and economic-disenfranchisement uprisings in its urban ghettos, it served to dilute and discharge the fury that most harbored towards the dominant group. Failure to acknowledge the common cause of the human dignity of all, thus to unify in a struggle for equal human rights for all, brings us to the chaos we have today among and within these groups. The special interest specific to a single ethnic group was allowed to be the focus of each such group. A fragile solidarity among such groups was weakened by a lack of trust fuelled by COINTELPRO and the other counter-intelligence methods used by federal and local law enforcement agencies which infiltrated organizations that these communities had developed as platforms through which to secure their rights.

In the United States, the most challenging and complex of the systems used to maintain the power and control of the dominant group is racism. Racism is the system on which the United States of America is built and functions as the premise of the actualization of human necessities of language, voice and legitimacy. In the early history of the colonies, which would later become the United States, the dominant group asserted the right to name and claim ownership of that which they named: native nations, kidnapped African slaves, and all that they encountered in the occupied lands which they had claimed to discover. The result is a complex, multi-layered system grounded in the racial exclusion/domination/oppression of all considered to be outside the dominant group. This practice, which continues today, allows the dominant group to control who is included in or

excluded from the dominant group. The tool of racism, a creation of the United States, is as old as the country. However, its manifestations are not always the same. The institutions which created and sanctioned racism and the human actors who implemented its mandates in the Jim Crow era look very different from the institutions and actors of 21<sup>st</sup>-century urban American era. Thus allows many to make the mistaken claim that racism is a problem of the past and a prop to enable those lacking ambition.

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, racism was the topic of much talk, debate and theorizing in the academy and the media. Sadly, we confuse talking about something to be the same as doing something to address that problem. In a discussion on the use of the terms *racism* and *racist*, psychologist Cedric Clark noted: “Human beings seem to prefer to name things rather than to do something about them, and consequently to talk about things rather than to do something about them.”<sup>19</sup>

All of the identity markers used in discussing this group women (e.g. “women of color” or “women of faith”) simultaneously remove us from the dominant group and dilute our humanity—the right of full covenant with the Creator and the unalienable rights delineated in the Constitution of United States. When language and interpretation of scripture or religious doctrine are imposed, or when autonomy is denied, we can never arrive at the holy beautiful mess of Babel or the Day of Pentecost—where humans co-exist with our differences and experience our full humanity, where humans are intoxicated with the blessing of being human, where the full humanity of all is celebrated and protected.

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<sup>19</sup> Clark August, 1969.

Getting there from here is the challenge for all. To get there, we must be intentional about how language is used; we must move from negating our humanity in the layering of the identity markers we use to describe ourselves and others.

When faith practitioners make a collective effort (be it inter- or intra-faith) to put their faith into action in a specific local culture, the result is an impressive demonstration of the living word: the word comes to life through their action. These processes are termed *inculturation*—a community’s collective attempt to enact faith in ways that are relevant to a concrete culture. Caution is advised not to view these processes as proselytizing strategies; they are actually adherence to a basic theological principle which acknowledges the presence and work of the Divine in all places.

Many scholars of religion and social scientists agree that the specific contribution of religion lies in the hermeneutical aspects and ethical enactment of its tenets, which are based on critical communication. The more religion is able to develop a critical relation with its sources and cultural reality, the more inspirational, transformative and contributory it will be to the lives of those it serves.

It is important for those undertaking faith-based activities in the centers of American urban decay—the ghettos of urban America—to maintain a healthy skepticism regarding the many competing cultures that are influencing the messaging of faith communities and the work done by people of faith to service these communities. Here the focus is on two such cultures: on the one hand, there is the culture of “get yours, get paid, get rich and get out;” on the other hand, there is the glorification of the impoverishment and decay—the ghetto-fabulous culture where the unacceptable becomes the desirable.

Paulo Freire views these cultural manifestations as indicative of a more difficult and complicated problem in which the poor have internalized the powerful's view of them, such that they see themselves from the perspective of the powerful and the rich.<sup>20</sup> The poor then become active participants in their own cultural oppression. As in other societal structures and institutions, the powerful rule the cultural world and perpetuate their views in the poor through school education, mass media, and (painfully, at times) through organized religion. Therefore, the poor become "dumb" in the sense that they are not able to express their own true views and act in their best interests. The imposed ideal is to join the elite class by becoming one of the powerful and the rich. This option does not offer any empowerment to the poor. The empowerment that comes through the activities of naming one's needs and the processes by which they will be addressed is denied here.

In the United States, a common practice of the ruling class, the rich and powerful, is to assign leaders to marginalized, often poor, communities. Great caution must be exercised in assigning leadership roles in and to these communities. In their ambition to join the ruling elite, the assigned leaders (in many instances) are willing to exploit (or to facilitate the exploitation of) the flock—the communities which have supported and invested in their entry or access to the dominant arena. Poverty pimps, an appropriate label for this group, include many people of the cloth. Charged with the spiritual care of congregants, these faith leaders offer theological messaging that supports the status quo and discourages activities toward transforming the community and the individual life of its members. Poverty pimps within the existing leadership; regardless of the faith tradition they claim,

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<sup>20</sup> Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is perhaps the most influential thinker about education in the late twentieth century, he has been particularly popular with informal educators with his emphasis on dialogue and his concern for the oppressed.

are a betrayal of the special consideration and privilege granted by *Allah* to the poor and marginalized.

In his article, “Interfaith and Social Capital: The Role of Religious Difference, Interfaith Networks, and Social Capital in Fostering Local Civil Society,” Matthew Weiner coins the term *grass-roots religious leaders*.<sup>21</sup> Weiner’s research examines the social networking of “grass-roots religious leaders – GRRL,” with particular focus on how religions interacting with each other (across, within and between boundaries of each tradition) in civil society builds social capital. In this article, Weiner uses the case study, ethnography model to document how three individuals, each working on specific and at times urgent tasks, have cultivated expansive socio-political networks that they then make available to the primary group they identify with. All of the GRRL studied in this work were identified by the author through public programs of the Interfaith Center of New York. They all live and work in New York City, a venue in which, arguably, interaction between religions takes place where America is at its most religiously variegated.<sup>22</sup>

The majority of Weiner’s subjects are immigrants. An unintended outcome of his ethnography is insight into the role of the social networks immigrants develop in meeting their needs during the transition from immigrant to citizen. Here ‘citizen’ is not an immigration status, but rather indicates social position and participation.

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew Weiner is a Ph.D. candidate at Union Theological Seminary and a program officer at the Interfaith Center of New York.

<sup>22</sup> *Interfaith and Social Capital: The Role of Religious Difference, Interfaith Networks and Social Capital in Fostering Local Civil Society*, 1-11. This article is a preview of a larger work in which Weiner plans to document the work of ten individuals, including these three.

*God's Troublemakers* by Katharine Rhodes Henderson—a book about women changing the world through faith-inspired leadership in the public arena, through actions that are motivated by a sense of the common good, the right thing to do—provides another view of the work of selected urban faith-workers. Henderson documents the activities of twenty such “socio-ethical entrepreneurs,” a term she has coined to describe this daring blend of faith and action. She also writes about two types of marginality or “othering” characteristic of social entrepreneurs: *value-based marginality*—the ability to resist the dominant ethos while adhering to alternative values within a non-supporting milieu; and *vulnerability-based marginality*—which involves suffering in ways which lead to a sense of being odd, unacceptable or even less than human. For the leaders Henderson profiles, experiencing this type of vulnerability and suffering does not break them; rather, it orients them toward areas where great transformation is possible, one life at a time. In many instances, experiencing both types of marginality leads to the development of skills and tolerance for inhabiting marginal spaces and thinking outside and beyond the box, which allows creatively working outside the boundaries of mainstream structure (religious, political, professional) and organizations.<sup>23</sup>

This type of visioning is not without its pit falls: lack of self care, burnout, and lack of boundaries. However, it lends itself to greater collaboration, working for the common good, distinct from competitive individual accomplishment. This book has personal connection for me: in autographing my copy, Henderson wrote: “An official member of the Troublemaker’s club! Let’s keep building this world together.” Working with women within and around the Sarah and Hagar traditions, with phoenix-like lessons

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<sup>23</sup> Rhodes Katharine Henderson, *God's Troublemakers*, 17-19.

from the Book of Ruth, Henderson calls us to a place of faith which inspires action, which functions beyond boundaries of religion, which is inclusive and plural.

The literature reviewed in response to the questions posed by this project reveals that, in terms of scope and volume, the wealth of scholarship in the New York metropolitan area on civic participation as an act of faith, on civic participation which leads to faith, on religious participation and service delivery that transforms and empowers. It also documents the many bonus gems of research projects that do not make the final cut, but which the researcher incorporates into her life and work as engaged surrender, an act of faith, as a tool which continues to be used.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of human services delivered in communities like Highbridge make an unstated demand of victimhood from clients before they can receive much needed services. Clients are addressed and treated as “*agency-less*” entities (i.e. persons lacking the ability to navigate civically or socially) with no ability to participate in the resolution of their problems and or challenges, often seen as cultural deviants, rejecting or not sharing the norms of the dominant culture. Thus the social capital, the God like attributes of the poor, go unacknowledged.

This project offers an alternative to the problem of victimhood-premised human-service delivery by employing tools of participatory collective action and education for the transformation, empowerment and sustainability of the Highbridge community—its residents and stakeholders.

Keeping true to my personal tradition (my faith calling) of naming the gaps (an assertion of power and of the art of disruption)—my tradition of not knowing my place while honoring my call from the Divine to be in this place, coupled with a skill for teaching



through discomfort—I voice a strong concern. As a candidate of the degree of Doctor of Ministry (Multi-Faith Track) and a practicing *Muslimah*, I assert that language has been the greatest hurdle to my full inclusion in the program and the Seminary. I attribute this challenge to the problem of *language* as a pillar of culture. Being a pioneering *Muslimah* in an Evangelical Christian Seminary in 21<sup>st</sup>-century New York City demands the articulation and documentation of the disparity between the institution’s statement of “inclusion” when launching this multi-faith program and the culture and language of the institution as I experience it as a candidate of this unique program.

The discussion above demonstrates that language, a tool of power determines access. Having command of the language of a specific context is required for empowerment.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Muslims and Human Service in the United States**

Research on Muslims in the United States inevitably leads into the simmering debate regarding the number of Muslims in the United States, and the racial, ethnic gender and socio-economic status of that population. Leading information outlets and public opinion shapers have weighed in on the debate. The New York Times<sup>24</sup> and the Washington Post<sup>25</sup> have run extensive articles on multiple research and demographic projects conducted to answer this question, the results of which then lead to additional research on the subject by Muslim entities (i.e. Muslim Public Affairs Council) and non-Muslim entities (i.e. the Pew Foundation). Even the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States is featured in this debate, having stated to French television station Canal Plus: “If you actually took the number of Muslims Americans (sic), we’d be one of the largest Muslim countries in the world.”<sup>26</sup>

This statement, made in lead-up to President Obama’s Cairo Address of June 4, 2009, resulted in the following post on the Pulitzer Prize-winning website PolitiFact.com:

Some PolitiFact readers heard Obama’s claim and asked us to check it. We should note that estimates of the number of Muslims living in America

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<sup>24</sup> *The New York Times*, Nov. 24, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> *Washington Post*, Nov. 24, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> *PolitiFact*, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2009/jun/04/barack-obama> (accessed September 2009) .

varies greatly. For example, the Islamic Information Center, a group that educates people in the United States about Islam, says there are upwards of 8 million. And NationMaster.com, a Web site that allows users to compare different countries based on demographics, pegs the number at 6 million. We are using numbers from the *CIA Online World Factbook*, a highly regarded government source for global statistics. It's updated twice a month, and we're relying on the latest version. By the *World Factbook's* count, Muslims in the United States make up about 0.6 percent of the population. That's around 1.8 million.<sup>27</sup>

The official fact sheet of the State U.S. Department documents the following:

- Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the U.S. By the year 2010, America's Muslim population is expected to surpass the Jewish population, making Islam the country's second-largest faith after Christianity.
- The American Muslim community is a mosaic of cultures, its members having come from all of the five major continents. In fact, a recent survey showed that most Muslims are immigrants -- 77.6% versus 22.4% U.S. born.
- This same survey indicated that the ethnic origins of the Muslim community are as follows:
  - 26.2% Middle East (Arab)
  - 24.7% South Asia
  - 23.8% African American
  - 11.6% Other
  - 10.3% Middle East (Not Arab)
  - 6.4% East Asia
- While there are no official population figures for religious affiliation in the United States, experts estimate that there are approximately six million American Muslims. Other estimates range from four to eight million.
- The Britannica Book of the Year estimated that, in mid-2000, there were 4,175,000 Muslims in the United States, 1,650,000 of whom are African American in origin. An average of 17,500 African Americans converted to Islam each year between 1990 and 1995.
- The earliest group of Muslims to arrive in America in significant numbers came from West Africa from 1530 to 1851, because of the slave trade. They comprised an estimated 14% to 20% of the hundreds of thousands of West Africans forcibly removed from their homelands.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

- The next sizable number of Muslims immigrated to the United States during the early 20th century. They came from Lebanon, Syria and other countries across the Ottoman Empire.
- The post-World War II era, during the 1960s and '70s, saw the third substantial wave of immigrants from all parts of the Islamic world. This wave included large numbers of Muslims who came to study at American universities.
- Approximately a third of American Muslims live on the East Coast (32.2%), 25.3% live in the South, 24.3% in the Central/Great Lakes Region, and 18.2% in the West.
- There are nearly 2000 mosques nationwide as well as numerous Islamic day schools and Sunday and weekend schools.<sup>28</sup>

This analysis of the Muslim community in the United States provided on the official fact sheet of the U.S. State Department is useful to my project as I attempt to understand how Muslims in the United States make Islamic concepts of community, service, and leadership operational, with particular focus on the context of urban centers like the South Bronx (where Highbridge is located).

As Muslims embrace teachings of justice for all as a right and a responsibility, how do we demonstrate our understandings of these teachings? How do Muslims navigate the social segregation that exists in their local environment around issues of ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, and social status? Examining the role of multiple identities and how individuals select which identity to privilege in a given circumstance will be important and necessary in this discourse. Also central to this project is how Muslims are perceived in the arena of human service providers and recipients in urban America.

Relying on the frame presented by the US State Department, I estimate the current Muslim population in the United States to be between 8 and 10 million. Some 800,000 to

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<sup>28</sup> U. S. State Department. <http://www.islamfortoday.com/historyusa4.htm> (accessed November 5, 2009).

one million are located in the New York metropolitan area; and approximately fifty percent of that number are concentrated in New York City's urban center, mostly in poor and or working class neighborhoods.

A Muslim presence in the New York metropolitan area (albeit then called 'Black Muslims') is first acknowledged in the late 1950s. The close-cropped hair cuts and tailored suits of the members of the Nation of Islam contrasted with the grunge look of the addicts and alcoholics in the black community, and drew interest in the NOI from the wider public because of the transformative impact it had in the lives of its members. In New York City, Harlem Temple #7, headed by Malcolm X, was the beacon of this mass transformation through human service delivery that is faith premised, though not necessarily articulated as such. The transformative success of the NOI rehabilitation of former substance-abusers captured the attention of mainstream media, mental health professionals, and addiction and rehabilitation specialists by the early 1960's—as was documented in the New York Times article, *Black Muslims Asked to Help Treat Addicts Here*.<sup>29</sup> This legacy of Muslim human-service delivery in the urban centers of the United States, especially those with African-American majority populations, is often overlooked.

This segment of the Muslim community is where I locate myself and this project. In the second half of the 1990s, there emerged a strong demand for leadership from within the enclaves of local Muslim communities—a demand for leaders that looked like us, for leadership responsive to our local needs. Local leaders emerged in response to these demands; they were as diverse as the community. They included many *imported locals*—which created new challenges and demands.

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<sup>29</sup> M.S. Handler, *New York Times*, Jan 10, 1964, 84.

*Imported locals* are individuals invited from the country of origin of the majority group of a local Muslim community to meet some perceived need, but who have no relation to the wider Muslim community or to American society in general, and have little or no English language skills. This individual, in many instances, has no social capital for the American urban environment. This isolates the individual and limits engagement with the wider community of the local Muslims that the individual now heads.

In local Muslim communities with this type of structure, there often emerges social-capital brokers who choose for themselves one of two possible paths. On Path One, the broker acts in the best interest of the community (Muslim and non-Muslim), for the common/greater good of all and in support of the *imported local*. Often, this choice is validated by citing a teaching attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that selected leaders are to be followed and supported. On Path Two, the broker acts for the benefit of self and status within the local Muslim community, most often with very limited engagement of the wider Muslim and or non-Muslim community. Local Muslim communities where the second option is operational are frequently language-isolated, its dominant language being other-than-English.

Varying types of leaders have emerged in response to the demands voiced by Muslim communities. Many needs remained unmet. However, there has emerged a dynamic conversation about leadership (both internal and external) among Muslims, other faith communities and civic society. Significantly, many who have emerged as lay community leaders for New York City's Muslim community are women—thus placing the New York City Muslim community in the epicenter of the greater international debate of the role, validity, and authenticity of women's leadership in Islam.

The Qu’ran states: “Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining good and forbidding what is wrong (evil): They are the ones to attain felicity. (Surah al-Imran 3:104) This verse, unlike many others in the Qu’ran, gives no gender specification for *band of people*. Thus it is generally understood to mean that *women* are included among the *people* discussed here. The cadre of women who have assumed public roles within the Muslim communities in the US and on behalf of those communities within the broader society is as diverse as the communities they represent or from which they come. These *muslimahs* include women who “cover” and those who do not; women who are members of a specific *masjid* and women who are not; women with formal education (Islamic or secular) and women with no formal schooling; women who self identify as leaders and challenge the male patriarchy dominant in most Muslim establishments in the US, and women willing to work within and on the periphery of that domain in order to avoid confrontation and or conflict with the male heads of the Muslim community—thus may be uncomfortable with the title *leader*. These categories overlap and contradict; there are women who operate within several at once.

As with the African-American legacy, Islam has a rich tradition of scholars who have placed their knowledge at the disposal of the community out of a sense of obligation. One such example of the scholar/teacher/activist is Imam Malik b. Anas, after whom the Maliki *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) is named.

Before explaining the relevance of the Maliki school to my project, it is helpful to review an important chapter in the early the history of Islam. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, there gradually emerged a need for written material that dealt with the legal aspects of Islam for the Islamic community to follow. The decision to move from oral

transmission of the text, law and history to written transmission was guided by the desire to have available (for the good of the community) what had been determined by the leadership of the day.

During the life of Prophet Muhammad his followers had believed in the message he preached about Islam; because they accepted that his words were directly from Allah, they followed the prescriptions that were given to them. Order was kept in the community with the legislative laws that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. His presence allowed other tribes and communities to accept the tenets of Islam without any major rebellions.

However, for nearly seventy-five years after the death of Muhammad, there was a decline in the growth of the *ummah*.<sup>30</sup> There was no scholarly activity of Islamic legal thinking or interpretation of Quran. Many people left Islam after the death of the Prophet Muhammad because they did not have any faith in the leadership of the Islamic community. The Islamic community did not appear to have any clear sense of direction during this period. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, attempts to maintain social cohesion and unity throughout the regions and communities that had been under his control/administration resulted in many wars and skirmishes.

Caliph Umar instituted the first legislative process reflecting the changes that were happening in the community. He reasoned that certain guidelines were established by the Prophet to implement rewards aimed at winning new converts, and that certain rituals were no longer necessary. It appears that Umar felt that the rulings of the Prophet

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<sup>30</sup> The body of the Muslims as one distinct and integrated community.



during his life time were not meant to be rigid, that they were not meant to be followed without the ability to be flexible in one's rulings.

Umar's death brought about a new problem that was not faced during his reign. The spread of the Islamic community throughout the world was causing problems that Islamic leaders were not able to cope with. People from other lands and people who possessed higher education and culture, were becoming Muslims. How could the Arabs address the needs of these people without the experience of a refined culture and education they would need to fulfill the task? The Arabs had no intellectual background to guide highly cultured persons who had studied the arts and had higher living standards. Many of these factors were paramount in why there was a stand-still or stagnation of the growth *ummah*.

The rule of the Umayyads brought a dual system with administrators to conduct their business and judges and governors to oversee the laws. This system offered diversity in applying and interpreting laws. The Umayyads ruled for over a century, but not without problems. People of different regions started to interpret Qur'an to fit the area in which they lived. The different regions that were utilizing their system all were implementing different rulings on similar problems, all the while denigrating other regions for their different rulings on a given topic.

In 132 A.H. the Abbasids were able to establish unity in the *ummah*. However, they did not have a set of laws that could be agreed upon by the entire Muslim community. They had to refer to scholars of the times who expressed the differences of the regions. The different regions all had to be respected when compiling a guideline for legal issues. What was legal in Kufah might not be accepted in Basrah.

Faced with this situation, Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, the second Abbasid Caliph, needed to find a person who would be accepted enough to be able to compile guidelines for the *ummah*. He sought out Malik b. Anas, one of the most respected and learned men of his time, to address the issues that faced the community and to establish a middle path for all to follow.

Under the leadership of Abd al-Malik, the wars in the regions subsided, and there was a move towards scholarly pursuits. This gave the Arabs a chance to grow and refine themselves in knowledge and study of Islam, the Qur'an, and the life of Prophet Muhammad.

Imam Malik had a profound effect on the practices of ummah then and now through what has come to be known as the Maliki *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence; school of thought). The influence Imam Malik had on students did during his lifetime continued to influence the four main schools of thought on Sunni practices, and continues to influence many of the scholars thought pattern today.

Imam Malik was born in Medina between 90 and 98 A.H., about 80 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad. His parents were Yemini Arabs from the Dhu Asbah tribe. He spent his entire life in Medina, which had a profound effect on his development. This was instrumental in nurturing his thoughts and shaping his ideology.

Imam Malik's lineage can be traced back to Prophet Muhammad by means of three transmissions. According to Abu Zahara, the grandfather of Imam Malik came to Medina after the Prophet's death to complain about the Governor of Yemen. The grandfather married into the family of Banu Taym Ibn Mura.

Imam Malik's grandfather was therefore one of the Tai'un (the second generation of early Muslims who had not actually met the Prophet) and was considered to possess great knowledge of the life and tradition of the Prophet. Imam Malik followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, uncles, and brother by memorizing Quran and learning the traditions of the Prophet (the hadith). These studies assisted him to formulate the thoughts that would lead to the development of the Maliki *madhhab*. Because Imam Malik was born in Medina and spent most of his life there, he was able to study under knowledgeable individuals in hub of knowledge on the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. Imam Malik studied with about 100 shaykhs or more. Some of the most famous were Ibn Masud, Zayd ibn Thabit, and Ibn Umar. Leaders from different regions of the Islamic world would seek legal rulings from Medina.

Imam Malik was considered a *faqih* (an expert in *fiqh*—jurisprudence) because of his mastery of the Qur'an and Hadith. This enabled him to give *fatwas* (authoritative legal opinions) on disputes or concerns that the community encountered. His ability to determine the soundness of hadiths and interpretations of them elevated him in the eyes of Muslims of that era. His students helped to increase his notoriety by spreading the *fatwas* he issued and the knowledge that he shared with them.

Imam Malik sought knowledge from people he considered to be competent and reliable. He studied the reports of the Caliph Umar, Ibn Masud and other jurists. Because he lived in Medina, he was able to see many of the practices that were left behind by the Prophet and his companions. The information he was able to compile from reliable transmitters help in enhancing his ability to derive decisions on future problems.

Once Malik had completed his studies, he felt that he was now ready to teach. He got permission to do this from the great shaykhs of his time. He sat in the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad, in the seat in which the Caliph Umar had sat. He held that position for 50 years, giving rulings and counsel to people.

The first written document to contain judicial judgments was written by Imam Malik: the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. Earlier scholars had relied on oral transmission of hadiths and law. The compilation of the *Muwatta* helped to establish a concrete record of laws.

It is believed that Imam Malik wanted to revive the example and practices of Prophet Muhammad and he studied diligently. His *Muwatta* is clearly closer to the Prophet's teachings than any other book. It is an authentic book on hadith and a source of guidance in understanding the *shari'ah*.<sup>31</sup> Even to this day, Imam Malik's *Muwatta* is considered a source of knowledge that cannot be challenged. Worthy of note here is that Imam Malik's sons demonstrated no scholarly aptitude. His scholarship and lectures were written down and preserved by his daughter, Fatimah of Medina. Therefore, *a woman* was the authority on the renowned *Muwatta*!

As noted earlier, Matthew Weiner defines in his dissertation defines *grassroots religious leaders* as faith practitioners, agents, embedded in and shaping the social lives of their community, just as their own faith and self are simultaneously shaped or transformed by their activities. Since the 1980s, a vibrant and diverse group of Muslim *grassroots religious leaders* have been active in the urban centers of the United States;

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<sup>31</sup> The code of law for Muslims.

however their paths were paved by members of an often overlooked segment of the Muslim population in the US: African-American Muslims.

African-Americans, the largest ethnic group within the Muslim-American population, have been and currently are city residents—concentrated in the urban center.<sup>32</sup> Coming into public focus during the lifetimes of the honorable Elijah Muhammad and Al Hajj Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X), the Black Muslims were very much a significant component of the Black Consciousness movement as well as role models of strong families, community building and self empowerment grounded in a disciplined belief and faith practice. Among Muslims in the US, race is particularly and uniquely significant among African-Americans due to their historical presence in the Americas prior to the establishment of the United States, in ways that are not the case for other racial/ethnic groups of US Muslims.

There are ongoing debates as to the authenticity, as Muslims, of members of the Nation of Islam and other African-American Muslims. What is beyond question is that the Black Muslims provided incredibly effective community and human service in urban centers throughout the United States for over three decades—from the civil rights movement to the crack epidemic of the early 1990's.

Too many of the plethora of studies on the United States Muslim communities post September 11, 2001, have depicted them as monolithic and or internally uniform. This neat bifurcation, with theories of oppositional culture and voluntary and involuntary minorities, follow notions pioneered by John Ogbu.<sup>33</sup> However, there are counter-studies

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<sup>32</sup> Mary H. Cooper, 'Muslims in America', *CQ Researcher* 33:16, 30 April 1993.

<sup>33</sup> John U. Ogbu, "Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspectives," *Minority Status and Schooling* (New York: Garland 1991), 3-37.

which challenge the explanations of oppositional culture theories. Theories of *achievement* ideology have been put forth by Nation of Islam members.<sup>34</sup> That a *culture of success* is a uniquely American phenomenon is a theory of scholar Cornell West.<sup>35</sup> Many studies miss the internal nuances of the complex diversity of the US Muslim communities. To date there are no studies of the privileging identity employed by individuals with multiple identities, visible and invisible. The silence on the practice of shifting and or performing identity among the enclaves of the US Muslim communities is deafening. It allows for the internal replication of the many forms of discrimination from the broader society within the US Muslim communities. It allows for creation of involuntary minorities, often people of color—African-American, Puerto Ricans and Native-Americans, all indigenous to the Americas—within the US Muslim communities. This practice is prevalent, though contradictory to all Islamic teachings.

The model of social service delivery, pioneered by the Nation of Islam, demonstrates a model of urban community leadership which is Islamic in premise, responds to American urban need, and is faith-inspired beyond question. The model is also localized, highlighting the social capital which emerges through the interactions of individual faith practitioners with other faith communities and civic society to address a community need.<sup>36</sup> This model of service delivery also presents a frame through which the paradox of the universal message of a faith tradition and required contextual specificity for its enactment by human practitioners can be explored, focusing on Islam

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<sup>34</sup>A. A. Akom, 'Reexamining Resistance as Oppositional Behavior: The Nation of Islam and the Creation of a Black Achievement Ideology.' *Sociology of Education*. Vol. 76, October 2003, 305-325.

<sup>35</sup> Cornell West, *Race Matters*.

<sup>36</sup> Weiner, *The Singer and the Song* 3-6.

and Muslims in the urban centers of the United States—often causing one to wonder why, in spite of Islam’s universal message of justice and peace, we are not able to do “one size fits all.” The paradox is not limited to Islam. Scholars who have grappled with these challenges include: Aminah Beverly McCloud, *Transnational Muslims in American Society* (2006); Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (2003); Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam* (1949); and, R. Drew Smith, “Churches and the Urban Poor: Interaction and Social Distance,” in *Sociology of Religion* 2001, 62:3.

An interview with Imam Abdul’haq Muhammed brought forth many details of the history of Muhammad Temple #7D (later known as Taqwa wa Jihad/Woodycrest Masjid). In 1974, the congregation of Temple #7D purchased the castle like property located at 981 Anderson Avenue (at 161<sup>st</sup> Street) from the City of New York City, and moved from the space they had rented at 1000 Morris Avenue. (Both sites are in the Bronx. This is in the southern tip of Highbridge.)

The purchase and move occurred in the period of transition for the Nation of Islam after the death of the organization’s leader Elijah Muhammad in February, 1975. Imam Abdul’haq Muhammed became the resident Imam in April 1976; his tenure lasted through mid-1985, when he relocated to Florida. Under Imam Abdul’haq’s leadership, several community, human, and education service programs were offered at the Woodycrest Masjid (as it was then known to congregants and the surrounding community) to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Offerings included programs for children and youth, such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and after-school programming; hunger relief, nutrition instruction, and food preparation classes; a vibrant prison outreach/ministry; a residential re-entry program for

the formally incarcerated, which provided comprehensive transitional services to clients/residents; a free health-care clinic; and an active chapter of American Association of Retired Persons, which coordinated the seniors program and provided mentoring and counseling to the faith community.

The transitional program offered at the Woodycrest Masjid was comprehensive in meeting the basic needs of its clients, providing food, clothing and shelter. The fourth floor of the building was designated as a men's shelter with twenty beds. It often operated at maximum capacity, and is thought to have served well over 500 clients during the time it was in operation. There was no limit to the length of time a client could be in residence; the average period was 180 days. Support services offered to residents and congregants included religious instruction, detoxification programs for substance abusers, parenting and family skills, job preparedness and placement. Recidivism among program residents was very low.

The free community medical clinic was headed by Dr. Anwar Aziz (a general practitioner); his staff included an internist, a dentist and an ob-gyn specialist, along with nursing and other support personnel.

Other community/human service programs operated at the Woodycrest Masjid included a cooperative food program for bulk buying, a sewing shop that provided sewing instruction and clothing for sale and a network of local businesses that offered employment and other services to the community.

Later on, a segment of the community purchased a working farm in the Newburgh area, in Orange county, New York. Other organizations that evolved from incubation in



the service programs grown at the Woodycrest Masjid include Woodycrest Human Development Corporation and Baitul Nasr.

According to Imam Abdul'haq, all of these service programs were self-funded, with no sources of outside funding during the time he headed the community of believers. This was very much in keeping with the Islamic teachings that the NOI. Later, Warith Deen Muhammad (the son of Elijah Muhammad) also championed reliance on Allah, being responsible for one's actions, and the dignity of work.

Sadly, the Woodycrest/Taqwa wa Jihad Masjid no longer exists. The magnificent buildings were sold in parts; the final sale occurred in 2004, closing a chapter in Highbridge and the Bronx of dynamic human development and community services premised in the teaching of Islam, provided by Muslims responding to the inability of many in the community to meet their basic needs.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE BIG PICTURE:**

#### **The Challenge from the local to the global**

MWIRD's mission and vision has evolved to focus on working with those served through the organization's service programs, to meet their basic needs in ways that protect, empower and guide to self sufficiency. None of the organization's goals are achievable if the dignity of the individual served is not passionately protected.

As it strives to transform the Highbridge community through example, by being a good neighbor, MWIRD cultivates relationships, one at a time, with other community members—residents, organizations and stakeholders—to transform this neighborhood through processes of community organizing that employ faith-tradition values, collective action, and individual development to achieve a greater/common good while addressing individual and communal challenges. In doing this work it has become apparent that there are many compelling needs for the reshaping of human service delivery in a manner that will make input from service recipients essential to models developed to serve them.

We are now three decades into the legacy of the burning Bronx.<sup>37</sup> inculcated into Bronx residents the belief that getting out was the only path to success. To escape the Bronx was the only way to succeed; to say one was from the Bronx became a mythical badge of honor which evoked romantic visions of desperate survival and triumph. The

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<sup>37</sup> During the 1970s, the borough of the Bronx, and the South Bronx particularly, became what some have called the most devastated urban landscape in the United States, due to a years-long series of fires—some accidental; many set intentionally by landlords eager for insurance money and relief from rising property taxes.

Bronx now stands victim to other models of failed social policies and urban community development programs that were parachuted into neighborhoods to save them and their residents, with no input from local stake holders. The usual justification was that these processes were successful someplace else, and therefore were ideal for the Bronx. The jury is now in; the verdict is that these policies and programs have failed the Bronx and its residents.

Drawing on the mantra of the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference of 1995, "*think globally, act locally*," the local work of MWIRD is informed by what happens in our neighborhood, city, state, nation and globally; but is developed and implemented to respond to needs on the ground in our local environment. In June 2008, Religions for Peace, a non-governmental organization headquartered in the Church Center for the United Nations convened a high-level consultation of religious leaders on the role of religions in advancing legal empowerment of the poor, for which the following preamble was given:

Each of our religious traditions holds as a fundamental tenet the dignity of every person rooted in the sacred origin of life. The exclusion of four billion people from formal legal systems violates this dignity and threatens their rights to civil—and at times—religious identity. Securing legal identity for all as equal citizens is a first and necessary step to advance the dignity and flourishing of life.

This statement is in keeping with the conceptual vision of MWIRD and is very similar to the guiding principles by which Father John Baumann, a Jesuit priest, founded the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO, now PICO National Network).<sup>38</sup>

In researching other projects developed on premises similar to those of MWIRD, in which community development requires the transformation of the community through the

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.piconetwork.org> (accessed September, 2009).

empowerment and transformation of individuals, the PICO model stands out. In general terms, MWIRD, like PICO National Network, operates on the following basis:

Participants in faith-based community organizing are invited to find their own powerful voices and to act, not as individuals, but as citizens in the largest sense of the word. This citizenship is not narrowly defined by any permits or cards, but by collaborative participation in public life. Insisting that the nation belongs to them and that the institutions that are intended to serve them must do just that, people of faith find that their sacred texts come to life in a new way through public action, healing the artificial separation between the life of a true citizen and the life of the spirit.<sup>39</sup>

The PICO model of local participatory community organization draws on the key values, common to all faith traditions, which call for action—individual and collective—to protect the dignity of each human.

PICO teaches that people have an inalienable dignity which stems from their creation by God. The inherent value of every person, regardless of their ethnicity, income, or religion, is a key assumption which underlies all of our efforts... People become leaders one step at a time through a process of action and reflection. Leaders learn to build relationships and engage in the public arena incrementally, and reflect along the way on what they are learning about themselves and the world in which they live...<sup>40</sup>

The interplay between dignity and leadership development, informs PICO's understanding of how leaders are developed; these aspects fall into four broad categories: awakening, participation, community and learning. To understand these key teachings of the PICO model human and community development, it is necessary to consider the organization's philosophy, which is documented by Jim Keddy in his article on the California PICO project.

The PICO philosophy, Keddy notes, focuses on the cultivation of local leaders through a process of education and training to identify issues, create campaigns to address the issues identified, and build community organizations for sustained individual and community development. This is done through invitation and challenging questions

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<sup>39</sup> Renewing Congregations.

<sup>40</sup> Jim Keddy, "Human Dignity and Grassroots Leadership Development," *Social Policy* Summer, 2001 2-5.

embedded in one-on-one conversation in the neighborhood, aimed at getting acquainted and sharing information. This type of organizing focuses on leadership development. It is committed to calling forth the leader in every community member by cultivating their skills to be power brokers and actors in their community and on its behalf, ultimately building the human infrastructure required to sustain the community.

The PICO rationale draws on the motivations of faith traditions to fight all forms of injustice and unquestionable instruction to act for justice, which provides the value base of the organization that emerges and anchors the organizing work that is done. Multi-dimensional in its framework the PICO model does not privilege any faith tradition or culture. Rather, it allows for the participatory inclusion of community member and all that makes them the person they are.

With the sincere hope to change the perception of Islam and Muslims as being isolated and self-serving, here are some examples of civic engagement and participation of practicing Muslims. The PICO Networks (national and international) include Muslim individuals and *jammahs*—congregations at mosques and Islamic centers. In the local network affiliates, Muslims often emerge as committed and active participants on the issues the communities identify as needing action. Muslims and Islamic organizations have benefited from the trainings and tools provided by PICO. In New York City there are two PICO affiliate networks (in Queens and in Brooklyn) which have active Muslim participants. NYC is also home to many informal affiliates that use the tools and draw on the philosophy of PICO—MWIRD being one of them.

The Benedict Avenue Community Food Pantry and the Community Food Pantry @ Highbridge, two food security programs of MWIRD serving the Parkchester and

Highbridge sections of the Bronx, are volunteer operated and sustained. All are welcome to use the services offered by both programs—programs which were established in response to identified community needs and as partnerships among community stakeholders and faith background. Both facilitate capacity building of the surrounding community by engaging residents.

Many Islamic teachings drawn from the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, and their contemporary interpretations speak directly to service and charity without humiliation and the firm and clear instructions to be diligent in protecting the dignity of those being served. For example, Sheikh Shaban Mubaje (a Mufti of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council) explains that, before it treats the symptoms of poverty within a given society, Islam calls for individuals to adopt lifestyles, and for governments and faith communities to adopt policies, which provide safety nets which prevent the fall into poverty by supporting self-sufficiency.<sup>41</sup> The strong work ethic of Islam emphasizes self sufficiency in practical ways, which significantly reduces the causes of poverty while limiting wealth disparities. Islam teaches of the dignity of each person and work, and the right to be justly compensated for work, through its call for work and aspiration to earn profits through a religiously permissible livelihood. It also warns against laziness, idleness, and sitting in wait of what others have earned. Combined, these teachings contribute to justice in wealth distribution.

One tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) states: “When an *imam*, a leader, closes a gate before someone in need, *Allah* closes the gates of heaven before the imam;” according to another report: “If anyone in authority over the people

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<sup>41</sup>Sheikh Shaban Mubaje, Mufti, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, participant in the high level consultation of religious leaders of WCRP, June, 2008.

closes the door before the poor, the oppressed, and those in need, then *Allah* will close the doors of His mercy before his need.” Islam thus calls allowing the poor to attain their rights, and places strong responsibility on leaders—religious and political—to act in ways to ensure that this occurs. There are also responsibilities placed on the poor to be actively engaged in transforming their condition, understanding that poverty is an evolving condition, not a permanent state of one’s life or a genetic marker.

It is a requirement of the Islamic faith tradition that laws of governance must address inequality to avoid conflict and unrest and protect the rights of all under its jurisdiction. Sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on this matter include: “If anyone fulfils his brother’s needs, *Allah* will fulfill his needs;” and, “Whoever relieves a believer from a grief of the world, *Allah* will relieve him of a grief on the Day of Resurrection;” and, “Whoever protects a Muslim, *Allah* will protect him in this world and the next;” and, “*Allah* is in the aid of the servant who was in the aid of his brother;” and, “He who is full while his neighbor is hungry is not a believer.”

Entrepreneurship and the building of wealth, along with the responsible management of assets are main components of Islamic finance which promotes risk-sharing. When taught to the poor, this could be an effective development tool. The social benefits are obvious, since the poor currently are often exploited by financial systems which lack ethical influences in their profit motive.

There are several prophetic traditions that urge work in order to earn a livelihood and avoid the humiliation of need. For example, according to al-Bukhari, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has said: “No one has ever eaten better food than that he has obtained from the work of his hands.” Thus work reduces poverty, lowers

unemployment, increases production, creates much investment, and opens human creative energies or innovation in various fields.

The enhancement and expansion of the work of MWIRD and the continued education of those who manage and direct its operations makes it a prime candidate to be an instrument of guidance to the power and dignity, intrinsic in being human, in local communities like Highbridge in the South Bronx (religious and geographical) where the dignity of a person is often a fatality of poverty.

As a people-powered entity, inviting community members to get involved in the organizing process, MWIRD envisions our collective growth in our awareness of our own worth. This expanded sense of dignity acts as a catalyst to challenge and the impetus to change status quo and to confront those conditions that threaten our well being by discrediting and or ignoring our values and worth and that of our neighbors. In the work of MWIRD, the collaboration with a person to develop their strengths and empower them is not a set of skills or learned behaviors. The collaboration is an organic dynamic process of growing to one's full self. As Keddy puts it, this collaboration "is a dynamic process of *becoming*. This process of *becoming* goes beyond the mere learning of organizing skills and extends into other areas of a person's life."<sup>42</sup>

Keddy further explains that as people become leaders, the process is transformative. All grow to become *bigger* people, embracing their God-likeness and become true reflection of their God-given dignity. This makes us unbreakable, uncompromising advocates in our own best interest and liberation; making MWIRD proud to be a worker in this vineyard.

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<sup>42</sup> Keddy, *op. cit.*



**CHAPTER 7**  
**POLISHING ONE PIXEL:**  
**Preliminary Analysis of the Challenge**

As has been noted in previous chapters, Highbridge is a community which epitomizes urban decay. It has had its share of human service delivery which renders the agency of recipients invisible, lacking in free will, incapable of acting in their own best interest, and lacking a spiritual center. For many generations the South Bronx and those who live there have been viewed as broken bodies in need of some type of recovery process, generally following the model of the twelve-step programs. Among people of faith and in most faith communities, an industry of urban mission has developed to save the lost souls in the urban centers, creating a culture of loveless leadership and salvation without service. To quote Dr. Connell West and media personality Tavis Smiley, “You cannot lead who you do not love; you cannot save who you will not serve.”

This project has undertaken to develop a replicable project that is premised in the Islamic faith-tradition, and which couples services developed to meet the basic needs of community members with tools to empower individuals to strengthen, rebuild and sustain their community. The tool draws on the strengths and skills of those participating in a series of activities and using the services of the host site, MWIRD; it also draws on my

own growth and development as a Doctor of Ministry candidate in the pilot of the Multi-Faith Track. The late Dr. Lowell Livezey, the genius behind the Ecologies of Learning Project (EOL), developed a seminar on Urbanization, Globalization and the Multi-faith Experience. That seminar greatly influenced the methodologies used in this project. A research project of New York Theological Seminary, EOL “investigates how communities of faith in the New York Metro Area relate to their surroundings and make a difference in their neighborhoods. These studies can help congregations better impact their communities, scholars better understand religion in urban life, and public officials and community groups better understand and support communities of faith.”<sup>43</sup>

The seminar began as a timid, uncertain venture into the dynamic interfaith arena of the New York metropolitan area by the four candidates in the pilot of the Doctor of Ministry Program’s Multi-Faith Track. In addition to highlighting the narrowness of the faith lenses\box of all participants in the seminar, the assigned readings were gender-balanced (two women and two men authors). The content of these materials helped us grapple with the complexity of multi-faith work, scholarship and co-existence in an urban setting. Intended to offer a look into the reality of the lives of faith practitioners in the City—to show us the ways by which they view, understand, challenge and engage the Divine, Allah, God—the seminar surpassed its goal.

We began by reading Robert A. Orsi’s *Gods of the City*, an anthology of articles on how religion is practiced and imagined in cities of the United States. The roles of migration and immigration in these processes are woven into and among the articles, which also describe the ways in which the creation of religious ritual and ceremony are

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<sup>43</sup> [www.ecologiesoflearning.org](http://www.ecologiesoflearning.org), accessed: June 1, 2007.

an integral part of relocation/migration. Interestingly, the articles also tell of the maintenance of religious ritual and ceremony in the city after communities leave the city—when the city actually becomes the site of pilgrimage. In this discussion on the imagining of religion in the city, it is apparent that the image of the city as it is constructed in the imagination of people *outside* the city is markedly different from those who live (in mind and body) *in* the city. The reader is guided through the images of cities developed, held, and at times imposed; and is taught about the morality of cities from the contrasting positions of dreamer/desirer (who has not been the visitor; who is living out fantasies ) and the resident (who has to succeed/survive in the city). In every case, religion is performed—whether spontaneously or choreographed.

Orsi's anthology also explores the centrality of nature and the elements (wind, fire, water, earth) in the imaging of that which is imageless, of that which is priceless (thus which should not be sold or owned in contested territory); it investigates the development of community and the establishment of new relationships and social lives. What remains unanswered for many is the role of religion in the development-stages in the life cycle of cities and in the lives of those who live and worship there during the various stages of the city's life cycle.

Our second reading was *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx*, by Reverend Heidi B. Neumark. Given the physical and environmental devastation of neighborhoods like Highbridge, where for many life is a struggle for each breath because of unbridled pollution, Neumark exposes the sacred beauty of all that is. The record of a nineteen-year journey, her book takes the reader on a captivating tour which defies the prevailing disconnected urbanization discourses about physical space, architecture,

culture, wealth and religion, using a unique writing style that renders all these exchanges inseparable and necessary components of a faith process. It confirms the credibility of the vision of my project and the research methodologies it utilizes.

Using the Transfiguration Lutheran Church on the corner of East 156th Street and Prospect Avenue as the centering anchor, Neumark shares with us her encounters with the Divine, as experienced when she was available to offer spiritual care to (and receive it from) the church and un-church in a community at the lowest point in the down-swing of urban decay. When everything and everyone understood success in the South Bronx as the ability to get out, this New Jersey suburbanite, an only child, recently ordained and married, moved *into* the South Bronx and was moved within: she herself was transformed at Transfiguration.

In *Breathing Space*, Neumark draws on themes that recurred throughout the seminar and as my own project unfolded: transformation, restoration and rejuvenation. She skillfully reveals the dynamism with which these themes were made manifest by the people in the places they live and how individuals negotiate their position in the processes of each theme.

Describing her experience at Transfiguration as “travelling in the belly of a paradox,” a phrase she borrows from Thomas Merton’s writings about the Prophet Jonah, Neumark challenges the arrogant ecclesial model (which, I will add, is also operational in other arenas by more sophisticated names) that assumes there is a prefabricated, everything-included, unquestionably correct model church (mosque, community, solution) available to plant/install wherever we find ourselves.<sup>44</sup> The connecting thread of

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<sup>44</sup>Heidi B. Neumark, *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx* (Boston, Massachusetts: 2003), 15.

the themes in the story of Neumark's faith journey is the need to be present and open to the unknown—the space where miracles happen.

The stories shared in *Breathing Spaces* are about miracles of transformation: through the fire of challenge, restoration; through ripping apart, destroying even by death, rejuvenation; through drought, bareness and hardship and the resilience. They are about the ability, the power, the faith to bounce back that each of these offer. Is this type of transformation possible in northern Highbridge? It is clearly needed. However, will our faith guide us through?

The third piece studied during the seminar was “Interfaith and Social Capital: The Role of Religious Difference, Interfaith Networks, and Social Capital in Fostering Local Civil Society,” by Matthew Weiner, a Ph.D. candidate at Union Theological Seminary and a program officer at the Interfaith Center of New York. As was explained in Chapter Four, Weiner's research examines what he terms the social networking of “grass-roots religious leaders—GRRL.”<sup>45</sup>

The fourth work studied in the seminar was *God's Troublemakers* by Katharine Rhodes Henderson, a book about women changing the world through faith-inspired leadership in the public arena—which has been discussed at length in Chapter Four, above. These four readings have helped me clarify my philosophy and method with regard to my own project.

Several social-science and education studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between behavior and expectation in assigned roles: that over time we begin to demonstrate behaviors expected of us in assigned roles; that we fulfill what others

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<sup>45</sup> See Chapter Four above for an account of the contents of Weiner's writing.

expect of us. When groups of students are not expected to excel academically over time they will perform poorly. I argue that the same holds true for the civic and social participation of residents in urban communities that are underserved and have a high concentration of society's undesirables. Northern Highbridge is such a neighborhood. As a human service program developer and provider, I have designed a model for human service delivery that ignites a passion of self-actualization and community preservation in those who participate in it. As a model, my project has begun to transform the human service industry from one that often requires victimhood to be eligible to receive services to one which facilitates individual empowerment through civic participation, while meeting clients' basic human needs.

To gain historical perspective, one research task of this project was to investigate how the low expectations of individuals in communities like Highbridge have led to disenfranchisement, criminality, or exodus (brain drain) from these communities. As a faith-in-action challenge, I was interested in learning about the Muslim presence in Highbridge before, during, and after its spiral from an upwardly mobile community—a place that fostered entry into the middle-class—to a community known for the highest incidents of negatives: new HIV/AIDS infections, lack of affordable housing, individual lives directly impacted by the penal systems, children and families in government-managed care, and poorly performing and overcrowded schools.

The main theological quest of this project is the calling forth of the Islamic tradition of the servant leader (a suppressed doctrine). I demonstrate that caring for the wayfarer/traveler (immigrant)—a main component of being a servant leader—is a model of great utility which can be used to address the urban decay and stagnation in

Highbridge. We have an example of this in Masjid Taqwa wa Jihad, an outpost of Muhammad Temple #7, which served the Highbridge community for about forty years.

Much of the history and programs of Masjid Taqwa wa Jihad has been explained in Chapter Five, above. It began as the Bronx affiliate and a property of New York Temple #7 of the Nation of Islam (116<sup>th</sup> Street, Harlem), in property was purchased in 1974 as part of the expansion of Harlem Temple. The Bronx site was the fourth property purchased by the Nation of Islam to house a worship space and community service center in New York City, hence the letter D.

Temple #7D, as it was originally called, always included human development and human service programs in its portfolio. The term *temple* was replaced with *masjid* after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, and the transition of the community out of the NOI under the leadership of Warith Deen Muhammad, into an American Islam which was more in line with orthodox Sunni practices. It became incorporated as Taqwa wa Jihad in the 1990's in order to be legally separated from the NOI and Farrakhan's leadership. Its programs are described in detail in Chapter Five. As I have explained, they included a residential re-entry program for men released from prison; a program for training formerly incarcerated men to be imams; and Baitul Nasr, an educational and human development program which went on to become an independent non-profit with an annual budget of over 7 million dollars and staff of over 200.

Acknowledging that the majority of Muslims living in western, developed nations live in urban centers begs for the reshaping of Islamic human service delivery in these locations. Often, there fails to be acknowledgement of what African-American Muslims

from the NOI and Sunni communities have contributed to the pioneering of this endeavor in urban America. This project is intended to be a small step in the effort to do so.



## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE WORK:**

#### **Human Service Design Shift**

This project's location, as I have explained, is the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD). Awareness was raised among MWIRD's constituents that human services which do not lead to empowerment and self sufficiency have great potential to make clients dependent and ill-prepared to attain their full capacity. This awareness was cultivated through meetings with six other community based organizations (CBOs) in Highbridge during May 2008: Partners with Parents, Highbridge Voices, Inc., ASAPRODOM, Highbridge Community Church, Turning Point Food-security Neighborhood Network and P.S. 11 Annex.

These meetings featured a brief presentation regarding the proposed model of human service of this project: to share the concepts of human services built on input from those benefiting from the services provided and committed to protecting the human dignity of those served by local and other direct service agencies. Using the project's abstract as the foundation, an outline was developed and tailored for each of the six organizations. At the conclusion of the presentation, which lasted between five to seven minutes, an

information packet on the services offered by and history of MWIRD was given to the host organization.

The organizations to which presentations were made were asked to provide feedback on the proposed project. They were then invited to make referrals of potential clients for recruitment to participate in the focus groups of the project. It was determined that securing ten referrals from each CBO would indicate success with the first strategies and goals of the project.

The presentations also granted the opportunity to introduce the MWIRD community survey, which informed in this project and which was conducted during the month of June 2008. This door-to-door, census-like survey of a ten-block area was designed by MWIRD senior staff. It was executed by paid interns, all of whom were college students from the community. Full success was attained in this phase of the project. Each organization to which a presentation was made committed to support and participate in the project—indicating that their awareness was increased about this project and the topic it was setting about to address

During the next phase of the project, MWIRD worked to secure over seventy signatures indicating interest in participating and agreement to be interviewed. Flyers introducing the project and a sign-up sheet for focus groups were posted at MWIRD's office. Recruitment of participants for each focus group presented the first significant challenge to this project. The interviewing of potential participants demanded more time than anticipated. This led to the hiring of an intern to assist with conducting the intake interviews of potential focus-group candidates. Over seventy individuals signed up and were interviewed, drawn from the talks, brief presentation, and the referrals made to the

project by other agencies to which presentations were made. The strong response indicated complete success for this segment of the project.

Another goal of this project, to recruit a diverse group of participants in the focus groups, was accomplished through the following steps. Prospective participants were interviewed. Of the seventy intake interviews, approximately twenty-three were conducted by Angie Martinez in Spanish; fifty-one were conducted in English by this project's principal investigator. Six Muslim men were interviewed; four were invited to the focus group. Seven Muslim women were interviewed; five were invited to the focus group. Fifteen men were interviewed; all were invited to the focus group. Fourteen women were interviewed; all were invited to the focus group. Eleven male youth were interviewed; ten were invited to the focus group. Seventeen female youth were interviewed; thirteen were invited to the focus group. The vision was to be able to have focus groups with various compositions: Muslim male and female, non-Muslim male and female, Muslim youth and non-Muslim youth, and a mixed group— the hybrid, which would draw from the earlier groups and would include a maximum of two from each group. Members of the hybrid group would be the candidates for the pilot training.

Invitations (the agreement letter) were issued to those selected to participate in the focus groups. Those completing the interview successfully were asked to complete a project application—to sign a letter of agreement developed with input from site-team members and consultants. Fifty letters of invitation were issued. Recruiting a minimum of fifty participants for the project was established as the measure of full success for this phase of the project. Full success was attained with this phase of the project. This phase

was conducted during June 2008 after the MWIRD community survey was concluded. The focus groups were scheduled for July. (See Appendix F.)

A total of seven focus groups were planned, however only six were conducted with the assistance of two consultants (site team members and funder were invited to observe). Each focus group session was scheduled for 90 minutes, with an additional 30 minutes available, if necessary. The sessions were recorded and transcribed using a professional transcription service. When necessary, translation was provided.

In this stage, full success was also met, because six focus groups were facilitated. However, there were some modifications to the composition of two of the groups. The two Muslim youth groups were dropped and replaced by two youth group: one male and one female. This decision was prompted by the low number of Muslim youth among the interviewees and failure to secure Muslim youth volunteers to participate in the Muslim youth focus groups. This challenge can be attributed to the scheduled time for the sessions, which conflicted with prayer times. It can also be attributed to the heightened fear among immigrants (and Muslims immigrants in particular) that civic participation and community engagement might have an adverse impact on their legal status (their right to be in the United States) and the ever-present possibility of being deported. Another challenge encountered in getting Muslim youth from the Highbridge community to participate is that, during the summer months, many of them travel to their parents' country of origin.

On the advice of our consultants, we decided to use a survey to guide the discussion of each focus group. The same survey form was used for each group; each participant was requested to complete a form as the group discussed each question on the form. This

allowed for the participation of group members who were not able to read the form. Here the varied literacy capacity of participants was revealed, and proved to be challenging.

Securing complete transcripts of the first six focus groups and a list of participants selected for hybrid group were the next steps in this project's design. Professional transcription of recordings of the session was contracted out to New York Reporting, Inc. The contract was completed with expected professionalism and delivered ahead of schedule. Upon completion of the six focus groups and review of the audio transcripts and notes from observers of the process, the idea to conduct a hybrid focus group was shelved.

The transcripts from the six focus groups were reviewed and analyzed for qualitative information, while quantitative analysis of the survey forms completed by each participant in the focus groups looked for solutions to inquiries raised by this project and for unanticipated outcomes. (See Appendix G.) A verbal report on the findings was presented to the project's site team during a meeting—instead of by written report, as stated in the project's proposal.

The screening interviews of perspective participants in the research component of this project were conducted in the MWIRD offices and were very brief. The focus groups were held in the MWIRD offices and in a rehearsal room of Highbridge Voices, Inc. During the initial interviews the language challenge confronting this project emerged.<sup>46</sup> A representative from the funding organization, Intersections International, observed two of the focus groups. All focus groups were observed by the staff of the host-site MWIRD; the staff assisted by managing the refreshment table during the focus group and provided technical support for and during each session.

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<sup>46</sup> The fact that 16.7 percent of the households in the Bronx are language isolated became a harsh reality for this project while conducting the intake interviews.

Meeting the requirements for each of the six focus groups (e.g., having a minimum of seven participants for each) was mixed, and indicated limited success in achieving this goal of the project. The additional measure of success, to have participants from the focus groups report on their experience and how they have implemented the learning from the focus group in their life and/or community, met with greater success. Based on the offerings shared by participants during the focus groups and on the completed survey forms, a community town hall meeting was called. The meeting was well attended, with over thirty persons showing up.

The approved proposal of this project stated that a model of leadership training and a manual were to be developed, working together with site-team members, project staff and volunteers, and focus group participants. As the deliverable product for this part of my project, this training manual was intended to be a tool for corporate leadership in human service organizations which are faith focused. This tool would also be transformative, in that it will guide users to self-empowerment, and to assist in the development of projects compliant to rules of governance that are transparent and replicable. After reviewing the audio files of the focus groups it was decided that a strategy meeting be conducted to lay out the proposed leadership manual. The strategy meeting took the form of a community town hall meeting. In addition to focus group participants, project staff and volunteers, and site-team members, the broader community of Highbridge was invited to attend and participate in the shaping of the final outcome of this project. As stated before, response was incredible: some thirty persons showed up and participated.

A first draft of the training tool was never produced, because the project deliverables were revised drastically after the findings of the early phases of the project

were reviewed. Human service sector partners of MWIRD and this project were invited to have input on the review of the early steps of the project and the final product of the project.<sup>47</sup> All provided the requested feedback. The idea of the deliverables was strongly discouraged because of time constraints and market glut of training tools and manuals for community organizing and development, which is, unfortunately, how this project was viewed.

Fall of 2008 was to have been the period for final writing and editing of the leadership training document. However, the suicide of my forty-nine year old brother in May 2008, after a life-long struggle with mental health challenges, launched a year of incredible struggle for me. This necessitated a one year leave of absence, beginning in the Fall 2008.

Initially it was proposed that, in addition to the pilot demonstration of the training tool with the hybrid focus group, four additional trainings would be conducted by November of 2008, using the training manual, to assess its impact in each setting. Revisions and modifications of the leadership training manual were to be made when necessary. Success with this goal, if it had been implemented, would have been evaluated through extent of participation: if everyone invited to participate in the leadership training pilot accepted and completed the training, this phase would have been considered 100% successful. Invitations to conduct the training at additional locations to other groups would have measured marketability of this project and its ability to be replicated.

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<sup>47</sup> During this stage, community organizing and technical assistance providers with a faith focus were asked to critique the leadership training tool. New York Disaster Interfaith Services, Health Care Chaplaincy, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Inter-religious Federation for Community Organizations) in the New York City area were consulted regarding the overall soundness of the project.

## **FINDINGS**

This project began with the ambition to develop a replicable project manual on community leadership and empowerment training. Utilizing social science research tools of surveys and focus groups, this project taught me that community leadership and empowerment projects are location-specific. I also learned that the effectiveness or success of this type of project is overwhelmingly determined by local participation and connectedness of the persons leading the project to the community where the project is being implemented, and their willingness to talk with and listen to community members.

The PICO Network model of contextualized community empowerment through responsive human services can be considered the most effective; however the contextualizing process is so specific that one then wonders if the resulting instruments developed for a project really can be attributed to PICO Network. This harsh reality became apparent during the community town-hall meeting of this project. It led to my realization that devising a leadership training manual in order to make this project replicable might facilitate and create the very models that the findings of the research component of this project strongly argue against.

The thirty-eight clean survey forms collected from the focus group participants were analyzed using SPSS 18.<sup>48</sup> The small size of the sample allowed only for limited data analysis. Generally, the findings were in keeping with those of the MWIRD community survey (see Appendix I). Findings indicating over fifty-percent

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<sup>48</sup> SPSS - In 1968, Norman H. Nie, C. Hadlai (Tex) Hull and Dale H. Bent, three young men from disparate professional backgrounds, developed a software system based on the idea of using statistics to turn raw data into information essential to decision-making. This revolutionary statistical software system was called SPSS, which stood for the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Nie, Hull and Bent developed SPSS out of the need to quickly analyze volumes of social science data gathered through various methods of research. SPSS website: [www.spss.com](http://www.spss.com) (01/20/2010).



unemployment; a young population with the mean age of thirty-five years, but with 47.4% under age thirty; 52.6% have lived in Highbridge for five years or less. The brevity of time of residence has direct impact, often negative, on the sense of being connected to or a stakeholder in the community.

The faith communities providing services in the Highbridge community were given a fair rating in terms of responsiveness to community needs: 51.5%. However, a qualifier needs to be added here. MWIRD, the host of this project, is visibly a faith-based organization and service provider, with most of the focus group participants also being recipients of services from the organization.

Some religious or spiritual practice and or belief informs the lives of 63.2 percent of the survey respondents. However, the majority noted that the houses of worship and the formal services offered are not responsive to their individual spiritual needs. When focus group discussions were allowed to go into free flow, the astronomical level of unemployment was the topic most talked about, followed closely by violence in the community. These findings were documented a full three months before the US economic crisis of Fall 2008.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **Lessons Learnt**

The distance between that which is proposed and that which is executed is immeasurable. My executing this project confirms this statement. When a student seeks candidacy in a Doctor of Ministry program, there is no hint that the individual discernment project envisioned, designed, and proposed cannot be executed single handedly. Candidates in the New York Theological Seminary, like me, are wisely counseled and required to consult and include input from site-team and committee members in the development of the discernment project proposal. However, the same firm guidance is not maintained for the project's execution.

From the initial pitch to the board and then the staff of the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development for the organization to be the host site for this discernment project, to the archiving of the data at each stage of the project, community input and corporate execution was required. Explaining to MWIRD's board and staff members how hosting this project would be of benefit to the organization seemed unsuccessful until some site-team members also made presentations about the timeliness and potential of the project. Once the project was approved, its execution was a corporate endeavor. MWIRD staff and volunteers assisted in putting the informational packages

together for the presentations to other human service organizations in northern Highbridge; interviewing possible focus groups participants; typing participant agreement letters and survey instruments; assembling participants incentive packages; and taking care of the catering for each focus group and the community town-hall meeting—as well as in the many tasks of creating this final document.

The lesson learnt here is that though an individual's name may appear on the document of record for a project, it is a labor touched by many hands and hearts. Included in this lesson is the knowledge that the proposed project has been reshaped and improved by the input of others, resulting in a project that is needed in northern Highbridge—one which will have transformative impact and yield maximum benefit.

The earning of the Doctor of Ministry degree involves the acquisition of a knowledge base and the design and execution of a project successfully, allowing one to be credentialed (licensed) as a developer of knowledge and projects which enhance the world of ministry and faith. On this ambivalent journey, a lesson learnt is that the road is traveled one step at a time.

A credible Doctor of Ministry is able to encounter individuals where they are in their life journey, with no judgment, while being responsive to each individual's needs. Working on this project enhanced my skill set to be present, in the moment, with each person encountered. Learning to celebrate the dignity and beauty of each person and the grace of being able to serve is an added value—an unanticipated reward which strengthens one's faith and harnesses the ego, while liberating the spirit.

The lesson that the revolution will not be televised, learnt during the urban liberation uprisings of the 1960s and 70s, has a complementary component that is not

often articulated: “transformation must be individualized.” This lesson has been well learnt and operationalized by PICO, and has embraced as the work of this project unfolded. Mass conversion is not a part of the historical narrative or sacred texts of the Christian or Islamic faith traditions. The transformation occurs one person at a time, through individual encounters and life-action invitations with no proselytizing—a lesson lost in the age of the mega houses of worship and the race to fill heaven with the chosen.

In advocating for making room for other ways of knowing, the lesson learnt was that storytelling cannot be taught by reading a book. The tools of execution employed for this project showed that a training manual is not an effective mechanism for the effective replication of a project of this kind. Localized community-based human-service projects must grow from within if they are to be transformative, bringing about lasting change.

The most insightful lesson I have received from this project is that when God cannot be communicated, God cannot be shared. Without a personal experience of the Divine which lives in one’s bosom as a constant companion, one is not able to share the joy of his bounty, mercy and grace. The power of such experiences is beyond the individual. MWIRD is not a house of worship. However, in the past year, a number of women have come to the organization’s office seeking religious/spiritual guidance. Some inquired about Islam; others did not. This can be understood as the successful cultivation of a community presence that conveys faith in action.

The work of this project inspired the host site MWIRD to change its motto to “Services that Empowers”. MWIRD has embraced the task of rethinking and shifting the human service sector—particularly those based in faith communities (the main aim of this project)—to a more empowering stance on behalf of those being served. MWIRD

also credits the findings of the focus groups and the community survey with assisting the organization in securing a solid position as a community leader in northern Highbridge. MWIRD is recognized as a “go to” entity for community members, other community organizations, and media outlets on matters relating to the community or the organization’s work. This is attributed in some measure to the work and results of this project.

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A**

### **Community Service Project Proposal**

#### **Text of application for research funds**

I hereby request a grant for \$3650 for funding a series of six focus groups and a leadership training pilot, which constitute the community service component, necessary to satisfy my discernment project requirements. This project (not yet named) will be conducted in Northern Highbridge, Bronx and will pilot a model of human service delivery which empowers participants to utilize their resilience, to protect their human dignity, resist structures which maintain injustice and inequity.

The proposed project will be conducted at The Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development – MWIRD by Nurah W. Amat'ullah (Rosalie P. Jeter), the founder of MWIRD. MWIRD is an entity that embodies the ministry, mission and spirituality of Nurah and those she encounters on her journey to herself, her journey to the Divine—to Allah. Since 1997, MWIRD, currently located in Northern Highbridge, has given physical manifestation and formal expression to an embodied spiritual journey, which began with the formation of the Mount Hope Masjid Food Pantry, the first *halal* (in keeping with the Islamic dietary regulations) food pantry in New York City.

MWIRD serves the populations in Community Boards 4 and 9, encompassing the Castlehill, Highbridge, Parkchester, and Unionport sections of the Bronx, the poorest urban county in the United States. The Highbridge area, where this project will be located, has a population of approximately 228,000, fifty-seven percent of whom have resided in the United States for less than ten years. The ethnic composition is as follows: 59% Hispanic, 37% of African descent, 3% of Asian descent, 1% other.

The focus groups will be conducted January through March, 2008 with the pilot of the leadership training to be conducted before June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The community service component of this project begins by working with the site-team to compose a one page invitation to participate in a focus group. The invitation will describe: the discernment project, the nature of the focus group discussion, the role of participants, and the requisite consent form. The consent form will request permission and consent to record (audio/video) the focus group sessions and the pilot training.

The invitation to participate in a focus group will be open to MWIRD clients from the Highbridge section of the Bronx. Prospective participants will complete a sign-in sheet by providing name, age, sex, address email and telephone number. Those who sign in will be screened by means of a brief interview to determine eligibility for participation and focus group assignment. Selection will be made on a “first come” basis for each of six focus groups, one group for each of the following: Muslim males, Muslim females, non-Muslim males, non-Muslim females, Muslim youth and one non-Muslim youth. A minimum of seven participants will be selected for each group. In addition, a seventh focus group will be formed by drawing one or two people from each of the earlier groups. The participants of the seventh focus group will be the candidates for the pilot.

The focus group sessions will be scheduled for 60- to 90-minute sessions. Site-team members will be invited to attend focus group sessions. The sessions will be recorded and transcribed using professional transcription services. If necessary, translation will be provided. The transcripts from the focus groups will be reviewed and analyzed. A report on the findings will be written, with collaborative input from the site-



team members, project staff, volunteers and participants. The report will use to develop the leadership training tool of my discernment project.

### **Project Budget**

Metro-cards <i>70 participants x \$20 card</i>	\$1,400
Supplies	\$350
Facilitators <i>\$100 per wkshp/\$250 training</i>	\$950
Refreshments <i>7 focus groups@\$50each/training-\$100</i>	\$450
Transcription Services	\$300
Miscellaneous	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3650</b>

**Appendix B**  
**Actual Project Budget**

Participants Incentives - (38)	\$1900
Refreshments – <i>6 Focus groups</i>	\$ 300
Transcriptions - <i>178 pages</i>	\$ 845.50
Supplies and duplication	\$ 157
Editiiing	\$ 500
Data Analysis	\$ 350
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,052.50</b>
<i>Research grant from Intersections International</i> A program of the Marble Collegiate Church	<b>\$4000</b>

**Appendix C**  
**Advertisement Soliciting Focus Group Participants (English)**



MUSLIM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**Earn \$50 dollars in 90  
minutes**

Get fifty dollars\* for spending an hour and a half of your time discussing the needs of your community (Northern Highbridge), and how you can make a difference working with likeminded neighbors. For more information contact MWIRD @ 917-529-5242 or come into our office at 1363 Ogden Avenue.

\*incentive

Refreshments will be served

**Appendix C1**  
**Advertisement Soliciting Focus Group Participants (Spanish)**

MUSLIM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**Gane \$50 dolares en  
90 minutos**

Obtenga cincuenta dollars\* de incentivo por acompañarnos una hora y media de su tiempo discutiendo las necesidades de tu comunidad(Northern Highbridge), y como podemos hacer la diferencia trabajando como buenos vecinos.

\*Incentivo

\*

Refrigerios seran servidos.

Appendix D

NORTHERN HIGHBRIDGE COMMUNITY HEALTH SURVEY  
INTAKE INTERVIEW



Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

1. What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Number/Street \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex 0. Female \_\_\_\_ 1. Male \_\_\_\_

4. What is your race/ethnicity?

\_\_\_\_ 1. Black, African-American

\_\_\_\_ 4. Native American

\_\_\_\_ 7. Other

\_\_\_\_ 2. White

\_\_\_\_ 5. Latino/Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ 3. Asian

\_\_\_\_ 6. Continental Africa

5. How old are you today?

\_\_\_\_ Years

6. What is your marital status?

\_\_\_\_ 1. Single, never married

\_\_\_\_ 2. Married 6a. Are you living together with a partner? \_\_\_\_ 0. No \_\_\_\_ 1. Yes

\_\_\_\_ 3. Divorced or separated

\_\_\_\_ 4. Widowed

7. How many people do you have you living in your house?

\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_

Adults

Children

Total

8. In what country were you born?

9. How long have you lived in US?

\_\_\_\_ Years

**10. How long have you lived in Higbridge?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**11. What is the highest level of education you attained?** *[Year completed if not a graduate.]*

- \_\_\_\_ 0. No School
- \_\_\_\_ 1. Grammar School
- \_\_\_\_ 2. High school
- \_\_\_\_ 3. College
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Graduate

**12. Do you do any kind of work for pay?**

- \_\_\_\_ 0. Unemployment
- \_\_\_\_ 1. Full time                      What kind of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_ *[occupation]*
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Part-time                      What kind of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_ *[occupation]*

**13. *[ASK IF HAS PARTNER]* Does your partner work for pay?**

- \_\_\_\_ 0. Unemployment
- \_\_\_\_ 1. Full time                      What kind of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_ *[occupation]*
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Part-time                      What kind of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_ *[occupation]*

**14. Do you receive any public benefits?**

- \_\_\_\_ 0. No
- \_\_\_\_ 1. Food Stamps
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Insurance
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. If you have health insurance, what type of insurance is it?**

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Medicaid
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Medicare
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Medi-Gap
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Employer sponsored health insurance
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Private Insurance
- \_\_\_\_ 6. Military Health Care/VA

**16. In general how healthy do you feel?**

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Excellent
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Good
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Fair
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Poor

**17. Have you had any on-going health problems?**

\_\_\_\_ 0. No

\_\_\_\_ 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ [*health problem*]

**18. Is anyone in your household living with a medical condition which requires regular medical care and/or medication?**

\_\_\_\_ 0.No

\_\_\_\_ 1. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ [*health problem*]

**19. Do you have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice?**

\_\_\_\_ 0.No

\_\_\_\_ 1.Yes

**20. Do you think faith-based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community?**

\_\_\_\_ 0.No

\_\_\_\_ 1.Yes [skip to question 21]

**20a. Please explain.**

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**21. What is the main thing needed in this community?**

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**22. How would you rate your quality of life?**

\_\_\_\_ 0. Excellent

\_\_\_\_ 1. Good

\_\_\_\_ 2. Fair

\_\_\_\_ 3. Poor

**23. How many hours per week can you volunteer?**

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**24. Do you have any skills or knowledge, which can benefit this community, are you willing to share or train others?**

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## **Appendix E** **Invitation Text**

Dear Community Member:

This is an invitation to participate in a community leadership research project which aims to identify a cadre of community members in Northern Highbridge, with leadership qualities, to develop, participate in and pilot a replicable community empowerment training program.

This research project is hosted by the Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development and funded in part by Intersection an agency of the Colligate Churches of New York as an approved Doctor of Ministry (Multi-faith) Discernment Project of the New York Theological Seminary.

Overwhelmingly the majority of human services delivered in communities like Highbridge make an unstated demand of victim-hood from clients before they can receive much needed services. Clients are addressed and treated as “*agency-less*”<sup>49</sup> entities with no ability to participate in the resolution of their problems and or challenges.

The ambition of this project is to work with you with the hope to present with this project a model for human service delivery that ignites a passion of self-actualization and community preservation in its participants. As a model, the project proposes to initiate a very small step to the transform the human service industry from one that often requires the individual seeking assistance to take on the mantle of *victim-hood* to one that facilitates individual empowerment through civic participation, through using dialogical engagement, increasing awareness and education while servicing client basic human needs.

We hope you will agree and commit to actively participate in one of the research project's focus groups to discuss your views of what is needed in the Northern Highbridge community and what you will do to meet those needs. Thank you.

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Nurah W. Amat'ullah of the Doctor of Ministry – Multi-faith Program, New York Theological Seminary. You are being asked because you are a member of the Northern Highbridge community.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to survey your opinions of the needs of your community and what you can do to address those needs.

**PARTICIPATION:** You will be asked to participate in a 90 min. focus group with 6-9 other aspiring community leaders and share your opinions.

**RISKS & BENEFITS:** There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study. We expect the project to benefit you by possibly furthering your understanding of the community in which you live. In addition, we expect this research to benefit society and social science by advancing knowledge of how community leaders are perceived.

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<sup>49</sup> Not being able to navigate civically or socially

COMPENSATION: You will receive \$50 in incentives (metro and phone cards) for your participation.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your current or future relationship with NYTS or its faculty, students, or staff and the Muslim Women’s Institute. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. In order to preserve the confidentiality of your responses, we have assigned a random number to this consent form. However, we request your permission to record the focus group for documentation purposes. If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research, please contact Nurah W. Amat’ullah at 718-960-2262, 1363 Ogden Avenue, Bronx NY 10452, nurah@mwird.org. **A copy of this consent form will be emailed upon request.**

By answering “yes” below, you indicate that you understand the above information, have had all of your questions about participation on this research project answered, and you voluntarily consent to participate in this research.

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F**  
**Community Research Project Time Table**

July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 – Non-Muslim Men group from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 – Non-Muslim Women group from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008 – Male Youth group from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008 – Female Youth group from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 – Muslim Men group from 6:00pm to 7:30 pm

July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 – Muslim Women group from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

## Appendix G Statistical Analysis

### Frequencies

#### Statistics

Street\_name

N	Valid	36
	Missing	2

#### Street\_name

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	167 st	1	2.6	2.8	2.8
	168 st	1	2.6	2.8	5.6
	169 st	1	2.6	2.8	8.3
	170 st	9	23.7	25.0	33.3
	171 st	2	5.3	5.6	38.9
	174 st	1	2.6	2.8	41.7
	Findlay Ave	2	5.3	5.6	47.2
	Merriam Ave	6	15.8	16.7	63.9
	Ogden Ave	6	15.8	16.7	80.6
	Shakespeare Ave	1	2.6	2.8	83.3
	Sheriff Field Byrd Place	1	2.6	2.8	86.1
	University Ave	5	13.2	13.9	100.0
	Total	36	94.7	100.0	
Missing	.	2	5.3		
Total		38	100.0		

## Frequencies

### Statistics

Sex

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0

### Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	25	65.8	65.8	65.8
	male	13	34.2	34.2	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Multiple Responses

### Case Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
\$race_multi <sup>a</sup>	38	100.0%	0	.0%	38	100.0%

a. Group

### \$race\_multi Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$race_multi <sup>a</sup>	Black, African American	26	61.9%	68.4%
	White	2	4.8%	5.3%
	Native American	2	4.8%	5.3%
	Latino/Hispanic	11	26.2%	28.9%
	Other	1	2.4%	2.6%
Total		42	100.0%	110.5%

a. Group

## Frequencies

### Statistics

Age

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		35.7895

### Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16.00	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	17.00	1	2.6	2.6	5.3
	18.00	2	5.3	5.3	10.5
	19.00	5	13.2	13.2	23.7
	20.00	2	5.3	5.3	28.9
	21.00	2	5.3	5.3	34.2
	25.00	2	5.3	5.3	39.5
	28.00	1	2.6	2.6	42.1
	29.00	2	5.3	5.3	47.4
	30.00	1	2.6	2.6	50.0
	32.00	1	2.6	2.6	52.6
	35.00	1	2.6	2.6	55.3
	36.00	1	2.6	2.6	57.9
	40.00	1	2.6	2.6	60.5
	41.00	1	2.6	2.6	63.2
	43.00	1	2.6	2.6	65.8
	44.00	1	2.6	2.6	68.4
	45.00	1	2.6	2.6	71.1
	48.00	1	2.6	2.6	73.7
	50.00	1	2.6	2.6	76.3
	53.00	1	2.6	2.6	78.9
	54.00	1	2.6	2.6	81.6
	56.00	1	2.6	2.6	84.2
	59.00	1	2.6	2.6	86.8
	60.00	2	5.3	5.3	92.1
	61.00	1	2.6	2.6	94.7
	65.00	1	2.6	2.6	97.4

### Statistics

Age

N	Valid	38			
	Missing	0			
	66.00	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Frequencies

### Statistics

age\_ordinal

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		3.11

age\_ordinal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 20	9	23.7	23.7	23.7
	20-29	9	23.7	23.7	47.4
	30-39	4	10.5	10.5	57.9
	40-49	6	15.8	15.8	73.7
	50-59	5	13.2	13.2	86.8
	more than 60	5	13.2	13.2	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Frequencies

### Statistics

marital status

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		1.61

**marital status**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid single, never married	26	68.4	68.4	68.4
Married	4	10.5	10.5	78.9
Divorced or separated	5	13.2	13.2	92.1
Widowed	3	7.9	7.9	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Frequencies

**Statistics**

living with a partner

N	Valid	21
	Missing	17
Mean		.14

**living with a partner**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	18	47.4	85.7	85.7
Yes	3	7.9	14.3	100.0
Total	21	55.3	100.0	
Missing System	17	44.7		
Total	38	100.0		

## Frequencies

**Statistics**

In what country were you born

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0



**In what country were you born**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DR	4	10.5	10.5	10.5
	Honduras	1	2.6	2.6	13.2
	Niger	1	2.6	2.6	15.8
	PR	1	2.6	2.6	18.4
	USA	31	81.6	81.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Frequencies

**Statistics**

year lived in the US

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		33.58

**year lived in the US**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	7	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	9	1	2.6	2.6	5.3
	13	1	2.6	2.6	7.9
	14	1	2.6	2.6	10.5
	16	1	2.6	2.6	13.2
	17	1	2.6	2.6	15.8
	18	2	5.3	5.3	21.1
	19	4	10.5	10.5	31.6
	20	2	5.3	5.3	36.8
	21	2	5.3	5.3	42.1
	24	1	2.6	2.6	44.7
	25	1	2.6	2.6	47.4
	28	1	2.6	2.6	50.0
	29	1	2.6	2.6	52.6

**Statistics**

year lived in the US

N	Valid	38			
	Missing	0			
30		1	2.6	2.6	55.3
32		1	2.6	2.6	57.9
36		1	2.6	2.6	60.5
40		1	2.6	2.6	63.2
41		1	2.6	2.6	65.8
44		1	2.6	2.6	68.4
45		1	2.6	2.6	71.1
48		1	2.6	2.6	73.7
50		1	2.6	2.6	76.3
53		1	2.6	2.6	78.9
54		1	2.6	2.6	81.6
56		1	2.6	2.6	84.2
59		1	2.6	2.6	86.8
60		2	5.3	5.3	92.1
61		1	2.6	2.6	94.7
65		1	2.6	2.6	97.4
66		1	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total		38	100.0	100.0	

**year lived in Highbridge**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
	.40	1	2.6	2.6	5.3
	.41	1	2.6	2.6	7.9
	1.00	4	10.5	10.5	18.4
	2.00	1	2.6	2.6	21.1
	3.00	4	10.5	10.5	31.6
	3.50	1	2.6	2.6	34.2
	4.00	4	10.5	10.5	44.7
	5.00	3	7.9	7.9	52.6
	7.00	2	5.3	5.3	57.9
	8.00	1	2.6	2.6	60.5

9.00	1	2.6	2.6	63.2
10.00	2	5.3	5.3	68.4
12.00	2	5.3	5.3	73.7
13.00	1	2.6	2.6	76.3
14.00	1	2.6	2.6	78.9
16.00	1	2.6	2.6	81.6
17.00	2	5.3	5.3	86.8
20.00	1	2.6	2.6	89.5
21.00	1	2.6	2.6	92.1
26.00	1	2.6	2.6	94.7
32.00	1	2.6	2.6	97.4
34.00	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Frequencies

### Statistics

year lived in Highbridge

N	Valid	38
	Missing	0
Mean		8.9029

## Frequencies

### Statistics

highest level of education you  
attained

N	Valid	36
	Missing	2

### highest level of education you attained

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No school	2	5.3	5.6	5.6
	High school	25	65.8	69.4	75.0
	College	6	15.8	16.7	91.7
	Graduate School	3	7.9	8.3	100.0
	Total	36	94.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	5.3		
Total		38	100.0		

## Frequencies

		Statistics	
		any kind of work for pay	any kind of work for pay_partner
N	Valid	37	23
	Missing	1	15

## Frequency Table

any kind of work for pay					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	21	55.3	56.8	56.8
	Full time	6	15.8	16.2	73.0
	Part time	10	26.3	27.0	100.0
	Total	37	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.6		
Total		38	100.0		

any kind of work for pay_partner					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unemployed	14	36.8	60.9	60.9
	Full-time	5	13.2	21.7	82.6
	Part-time	4	10.5	17.4	100.0
	Total	23	60.5	100.0	
Missing	System	15	39.5		
Total		38	100.0		

## Multiple Responses

\$BET_multi Frequencies		
	Responses	Percent of

		N	Percent	
\$BET_multi <sup>a</sup>	No	15	36.6%	40.5%
	Food Stamps	20	48.8%	54.1%
	Insurance	5	12.2%	13.5%
	Other	1	2.4%	2.7%
Total		41	100.0%	110.8%

a. Group

**\$ins\_multi Frequencies**

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$ins_multi <sup>a</sup>	Medicaid	27	71.1%	79.4%
	Medicare	5	13.2%	14.7%
	Employer sponsored health insurance	4	10.5%	11.8%
	Private Insurance	2	5.3%	5.9%
Total		38	100.0%	111.8%

a. Group

**general health**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	8	21.1	21.6	21.6
	Good	22	57.9	59.5	81.1
	Fair	7	18.4	18.9	100.0
	Total	37	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.6		
Total		38	100.0		

**on-going health problems**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	26	68.4	68.4	68.4
	Yes	12	31.6	31.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

**if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the**

**Highbridge community**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	16	42.1	48.5	48.5
	Yes	17	44.7	51.5	100.0
	Total	33	86.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	13.2		
Total		38	100.0		

**rate your quality of life**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	3	7.9	8.1	8.1
	Good	21	55.3	56.8	64.9
	Fair	12	31.6	32.4	97.3
	Poor	1	2.6	2.7	100.0
	Total	37	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.6		
Total		38	100.0		

**if anyone in your household with a medical condition**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	19	50.0	51.4	51.4
	Yes	18	47.4	48.6	100.0
	Total	37	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.6		
Total		38	100.0		

**if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	14	36.8	36.8	36.8
	Yes	24	63.2	63.2	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix H

### Correlations

**Correlations**

		age	number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	year lived in Highbridge	year lived in the US	number of people (total)	number of adults in the house	number of children in the house
age	Pearson Correlation	1	-.295	.181	.954**	-.643**	-.658**	-.394*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.113	.276	.000	.000	.000	.014
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Pearson Correlation	-.295	1	.053	-.274	.162	.326	-.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.113		.780	.142	.393	.079	.789
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
year lived in Highbridge	Pearson Correlation	.181	.053	1	.208	-.167	-.041	-.221
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.276	.780		.210	.317	.806	.182
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38
year lived in the US	Pearson Correlation	.954**	-.274	.208	1	-.630**	-.672**	-.362*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.142	.210		.000	.000	.026
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38
number of people (total)	Pearson Correlation	-.643**	.162	-.167	-.630**	1	.791**	.827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.393	.317	.000		.000	.000
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38
number of adults in the house	Pearson Correlation	-.658**	.326	-.041	-.672**	.791**	1	.310
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.079	.806	.000	.000		.059
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38
number of children in the house	Pearson Correlation	-.394*	-.051	-.221	-.362*	.827**	.310	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.789	.182	.026	.000	.059	
	N	38	30	38	38	38	38	38

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

# **T-Test 1 : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by sex**

**Group Statistics**

sex		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of hrs you can	female	20	5.4000	3.51538	.78606
volunteer _ average	male	10	12.6500	11.58795	3.66443

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Equal variances assumed	10.277	.003	-2.607	28	.014	-7.25000	2.78067	-12.94593	-1.55407
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.934	9.837	.082	-7.25000	3.74779	-15.61934	1.11934



**T-Test : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by religion (have or not have)**

**Group Statistics**

if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	No	13	10.9615	10.69163	2.96532
	Yes	17	5.4118	3.49211	.84696

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Equal variances assumed	6.840	.014	2.014	28	.054	5.54977	2.75613	-.09589	11.19544
	Equal variances not assumed			1.800	13.968	.094	5.54977	3.08391	-1.06597	12.16552

## T-Test : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by faith

Group Statistics

if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of hrs you can volunteer _	No	12	11.0417	10.49558	3.02981
average	Yes	14	5.8214	5.09376	1.36137

T-

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _	Equal variances assumed	2.259	.146	1.652	24	.112	5.22024	3.16051	-1.30273	11.74320
average	Equal variances not assumed			1.572	15.360	.136	5.22024	3.32161	-1.84517	12.28565

**Test : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by on-going health problems (have or not have)**

**Group Statistics**

on-going health problems		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of hrs you can	No	20	7.5000	5.65685	1.26491
volunteer _ average	Yes	10	8.4500	11.44904	3.62050

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Equal variances assumed	1.183	.286	-.307	28	.761	-.95000	3.09469	-7.28918	5.38918
	Equal variances not assumed			-.248	11.252	.809	-.95000	3.83511	-9.36803	7.46803

**T-Test : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by country you were born.**

**Group Statistics**

country you born_USA vs else		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	USA	25	8.0000	8.34041	1.66808
	Else	5	6.9000	5.45894	2.44131

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Equal variances assumed	.124	.727	.281	28	.781	1.10000	3.91557	-6.92069	9.12069
	Equal variances not assumed			.372	8.305	.719	1.10000	2.95677	-5.67498	7.87498

# **T-Test : mean difference of number of hours you can volunteer by employed**

**Group Statistics**

wk_employed		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
number of hrs you can	Unemployed	18	6.8611	5.64073	1.32953
volunteer _ average	employed	12	9.2500	10.49567	3.02984

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
number of hrs you can volunteer _ average	Equal variances assumed	.968	.334	-.810	28	.425	-2.38889	2.94851	-8.42864	3.65086
	Equal variances not assumed			-.722	15.278	.481	-2.38889	3.30871	-9.43010	4.65232

## Crosstabs : association between sex and faith

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
sex * if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community	33	86.8%	5	13.2%	38	100.0%

sex \* if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the  
Highbridge community Crosstabulation

			if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community		Total
			No	Yes	
sex	female	Count	12	8	20
		% within sex	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	male	Count	4	9	13
		% within sex	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	16	17	33	
	% within sex	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%	

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.695 <sup>a</sup>	1	.101		

Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	1.652	1	.199		
Likelihood Ratio	2.749	1	.097		
Fisher's Exact Test				.157	.099
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.614	1	.106		
N of Valid Cases	33				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.30.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

#### Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal <b>Phi</b>	<b>.286</b>	<b>.101</b>
Cramer's V	.286	.101
N of Valid Cases	33	

### Crosstabs: association between religion and faith

#### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice * if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community	33	86.8%	5	13.2%	38	100.0%

have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice \* if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community Crosstabulation

			if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community		Total
			No	Yes	
if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice	No	Count	6	5	11
		% within if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	10	12	22
		% within if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	16	17	33
		% within if have or identify with a religion or spiritual practice	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.243 <sup>a</sup>	1	.622	.721	.451
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.015	1	.902		
Likelihood Ratio	.243	1	.622		
Fisher's Exact Test					
Linear-by-Linear Association	.235	1	.628		
N of Valid Cases	33				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal <b>Phi</b>	.086	.622
Cramer's V	.086	.622
N of Valid Cases	33	



## Crosstabs : association between country you were born and faith

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
country you born_USA vs else * if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community	33	86.8%	5	13.2%	38	100.0%

country you born\_USA vs else \* if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the  
Highbridge community Crosstabulation

			if think faith based communities are responding to the problems of the Highbridge community		Total
			No	Yes	
country you born_USA vs else	USA	Count % within country you born_USA vs else	13 48.1%	14 51.9%	27 100.0%
	Else	Count % within country you born_USA vs else	3 50.0%	3 50.0%	6 100.0%
Total		Count % within country you born_USA vs else	16 48.5%	17 51.5%	33 100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.007 <sup>a</sup>	1	.935		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.007	1	.935		

Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.642
Linear-by-Linear Association	.007	1	.936		
N of Valid Cases	33				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.91.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.014	.935
	Cramer's V	.014	.935
N of Valid Cases		33	

### Multiple Response : main need in community

#### Case Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
\$community_need <sup>a</sup>	32	84.2%	6	15.8%	38	100.0%

a. Group

#### \$community\_need Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$community_need <sup>a</sup>	affordable and better housing	3	5.0%	9.4%
	better choice of food	5	8.3%	15.6%
	faith based community	1	1.7%	3.1%
	health care	4	6.7%	12.5%
	job program	4	6.7%	12.5%
	more stores	1	1.7%	3.1%
	park	4	6.7%	12.5%
	recreation center(community center)	4	6.7%	12.5%
	security	5	8.3%	15.6%
	to help the lads	1	1.7%	3.1%
	unity	3	5.0%	9.4%
	youth program	13	21.7%	40.6%
	programs for senior citizens	3	5.0%	9.4%
	programs for women	2	3.3%	6.3%
	traffic re-routing	1	1.7%	3.1%
	schools	2	3.3%	6.3%
	bank	1	1.7%	3.1%

### Case Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
\$community_need <sup>a</sup>	32	84.2%	6	15.8%	38	100.0%
Total	community base organization		1	1.7%	3.1%	
	pharmacy		1	1.7%	3.1%	
	library		1	1.7%	3.1%	
			60	100.0%	187.5%	

a. Group

## Appendix I

### Analysis Variable : Age

N	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
772	48.5505181	115.2411279	3.0000000	999.0000000
Median				
31.0000000				

The average age of participants 49, however the median age was 31.

### Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Female	350	48.61	350	48.61
Male	370	51.39	720	100.00

Frequency Missing = 52

About and equal percentage of men and women.

### Race

Race	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Black	326	42.61	326	42.61
White	25	3.27	351	45.88
Asian	2	0.26	353	46.14
Native AM	16	2.09	369	48.24
Latino	346	45.23	715	93.46
Other	50	6.54	765	100.00

Frequency Missing = 7

Most were Latino and Black.

### Mar

Mar	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Single	530	69.19	530	69.19
Married	161	21.02	691	90.21
Div/Sep	60	7.83	751	98.04
Widowed	15	1.96	766	100.00

Frequency Missing = 6

Most of the participants were single.

### Work

WK	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	402	53.39	402	53.39
1	273	36.25	675	89.64
2	78	10.36	753	100.00

Frequency Missing = 19

### Partner work PWK

PWK	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	269	59.25	269	59.25
1	148	32.60	417	91.85
2	37	8.15	454	100.00

Frequency Missing = 318

Most of the participants and their partners were unemployed.

Birth Country CON				
CON	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
ff				
AFRICA	7	0.91	7	0.91
AMERICA	10	1.30	17	2.20
ANTIGUA	6	0.78	23	2.98
BKLYN	2	0.26	25	3.24
BRONX	12	1.56	37	4.80
BROOKLYN	6	0.78	43	5.58
CAL	2	0.26	45	5.84
CHARLESTON S.C	2	0.26	47	6.10
CHINA	2	0.26	49	6.36
COLOMBIA	2	0.26	51	6.61
CUBA	5	0.65	56	7.26
DOMINICAN REP	1	0.13	57	7.39
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	127	16.47	184	23.87
GHANA	8	1.04	192	24.90
GIANA	2	0.26	194	25.16
GREEK	2	0.26	196	25.42
GUINNE AFRICA	2	0.26	198	25.68
GUYANA	2	0.26	200	25.94
HAITI	3	0.39	203	26.33
HONDURAS	7	0.91	210	27.24
INDIA	2	0.26	212	27.50
IVORIA	1	0.13	213	27.63
JAMAICA	10	1.30	223	28.92
KENYA	1	0.13	224	29.05
KING COUNTY GEN	2	0.26	226	29.31
KINGS	2	0.26	228	29.57
MALI	6	0.78	234	30.35
MARION S.C	2	0.26	236	30.61
MECCA	2	0.26	238	30.87
MEXICO	3	0.39	241	31.26
MIGHT BRIDGE	4	0.52	245	31.78
MORR	2	0.26	247	32.04
NEW YORK	8	1.04	255	33.07
NEW YORK CITY	6	0.78	261	33.85
NICARAGUA	2	0.26	263	34.11
NIGERIA	1	0.13	264	34.24
NO COMMENT	3	0.39	267	34.63
NY	26	3.37	293	38.00
NYC	8	1.04	301	39.04
No response	31	4.02	332	43.06
PA	1	0.13	333	43.19
PANAMA	1	0.13	334	43.32
PHILADELPHIA, CAMDEN	2	0.26	336	43.58
PUERTO RICO	83	10.77	419	54.35
SENEGAL	1	0.13	420	54.47
SOUTH AFRICA	1	0.13	421	54.60
ST. KIHS	1	0.13	422	54.73
ST. KITTS	2	0.26	424	54.99
UNITED STATES	11	1.43	435	56.42
UNITES STATES	1	0.13	436	56.55
US	324	42.02	760	98.57
USA	5	0.65	765	99.22
USVI	1	0.13	766	99.35
VENEZUELA	2	0.26	768	99.61
WEST AFRICA	3	0.39	771	100.00

Frequency Missing = 1

347 of the participants were immigrants (424 US citizens). Thus 45% of the participants were immigrants.

**Do you know anyone living with HIV/AIDS HIV\_L**

HIV_L	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	517	67.49	517	67.49
1	249	32.51	766	100.00

Frequency Missing = 6

33% of participants report knowing someone living with HI/AIDS

**Do you know anyone living with HIV/AIDS HIV\_D**

HIV_D	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	390	51.66	390	51.66
1	363	48.08	753	99.74
2	2	0.26	755	100.00

Frequency Missing = 17

A 48% of participants know someone that has died from HIV/AIDS

**Do you think HIV/AIDS is a problem in Northern Highbridge? HIV\_P**

HIV_P	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	297	42.55	297	42.55
1	401	57.45	698	100.00

Frequency Missing = 74

57% of participants view HIV/AIDS as a problem in their community.

**Are you actively engaged in the HIV/AIDS response in your community or place of work? HIV\_R**

HIV_R	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	554	78.03	554	78.03
1	154	21.69	708	99.72
2	2	0.28	710	100.00

Frequency Missing = 62

78% of participants are not active in the HIV/AIDS response.

**Do you think the faith based communities are responsive to the HIV/AIDS? HIV\_FR**

HIV_FR	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
0	511	69.62	511	69.62
1	223	30.38	734	100.00

Frequency Missing = 38

70% of participants do not think the faith based communities are actively responding to the epidemic.

**How would you rate your quality of life? Life**

Life	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	220	29.06	220	29.06
Good	343	45.31	563	74.37
Fair	158	20.87	721	95.24
Poor	36	4.76	757	100.00

Frequency Missing = 15

45% of participant rate their quality of life as being good.

How would you rate your health status? HealthST				
HealthST	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
f				
0	4	0.52	4	0.52
Excellent	291	37.89	295	38.41
Good	348	45.31	643	83.72
Fair	85	11.07	728	94.79
Poor	40	5.21	768	100.00
Frequency Missing = 4				

Most of the participants self-rated their health as being good.

Do you have any on-going health problems? HealthPB				
HealthPB	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
f				
0	556	72.77	556	72.77
1	206	26.96	762	99.74
2	2	0.26	764	100.00
Frequency Missing = 8				

73% report no current health problems.

Is there anyone in your household that requires medication for their disease? HshldMed				
HshldMed	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
f				
0	624	82.32	624	82.32
1	134	17.68	758	100.00
Frequency Missing = 14				

Do you think your medical coverage is adequate? MedAd				
MedAd	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
f				
0	327	46.85	327	46.85
1	368	52.72	695	99.57
2	3	0.43	698	100.00
Frequency Missing = 74				

Do you have any benefits? BEN				
BEN	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
f				
0	444	60.16	444	60.16
1	167	22.63	611	82.79
2	51	6.91	662	89.70
3	25	3.39	687	93.09
12	42	5.69	729	98.78
123	9	1.22	738	100.00
Frequency Missing = 34				

Most of the population does not receive any benefits. For those that do have benefits, most have food stamps (22.63%).

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